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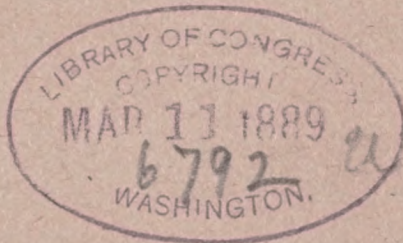
A BROKEN LIFE.

BY

GEORGES OHNET.

A TRANSLATION OF "LE DOCTEUR RAMEAU."

By J. C. CURTIN.



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A DOUBLE WRONG.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

AMONG the illustrious representatives of contemporary medical science, the most universally admired is unquestionably Dr. Rameau of Ferrieres. While acknowledged to be the first surgeon of his time, a Professor of Anatomy in the Ecole de Medicine, Rameau is also a physician without a peer. He has made some of the most surprising discoveries in therapeutics. Gifted with the keenest penetration and a singular audacity, he applies, in desperate cases, the most daring of remedies. And, with unequalled luck, he has performed cures that might almost be deemed miraculous.

To the confidence he inspires in his patients doubtless may be ascribed one-half of his success. It is an acknowledged fact that the appearance of Dr. Rameau at the pillow of the sick puts death to flight; that the patient, on seeing the doctor enter, already regards himself as saved. No sovereign of Europe can be taken with a serious indisposition without calling in Dr. Rameau at the highest cost. When the surgeons of Inspruck wished to amputate the leg of Archduke Albert, who had tumbled into a ravine while hunting, it was Rameau's ingenious treatment that saved the Prince from being a cripple for life. His bill for his services on that occasion was a hundred thousand thalers. When called to Caprera to perform an operation

on Garibaldi for a phlegmon of a serious nature, the only compensation he asked from the famous adventurer was a flower from his garden.

Rameau is a democrat and a free-thinker. A democrat because, sprung from the people, he has retained their sturdy doctrine of equality ; a free-thinker because, in his profound scientific investigations, he has never met anything but matter at the end of his scalpel, and his vast intellect refuses to admit anything that it cannot explain. He is one of the champions of evolution, and his studies on the perfectibility of races are of the most comprehensive character.

In his fiftieth year, and in the enjoyment of a vigorous physique that has never been impaired by excesses, Rameau is a man of commanding stature, with a countenance furrowed like a volcanic soil. His large and lofty brow is crowned with an abundance of grayish hair, wavy and shaggy like the mane of a huge lion. His gray eyes, clear and piercing as his steel scalpels, are surmounted by black and bushy brows. His florid countenance denotes a blood reddened by the activity of a life wholly devoted to labor. His mouth and heavy lips betoken kindness. But a deep wrinkle that appears between his eyes whenever he is pre-occupied or angered gives him a fierce aspect. At the hospital, or the amphitheatre, the remark, "Rameau has his wrinkle on," is a signal of alarm for the students. Every one trembles and is silent when the frightful frown bars the genial brow of the savant, for his bursts of anger are terrible and no one can appease them.

His rudeness is as notorious as his delicacy. No woman could bind a wound or adjust a bandage with a lighter hand or defter fingers. And no truck-driver could swear more violently at his horses than the doctor does at times at his assistants. The terrified patients bury themselves in their beds, crouch under the pillows, on hearing the thundering voice of the surgeon as he brandishes his ghastly operating-knife with a menacing air. He seizes

them, and the unfortunates, more dead than alive, learn with delight that the operation is over when they feared it was scarcely begun. Then they bless the marvellous skill of this kindly operator, and understand why it is that behind his back the students and assistants jocosely whisper, "Rameau hurts his patients only with his tongue."

This distinguished and meritorious man has attained the position he occupies in the scientific world by his strength of will and superior intellect. He is of very humble origin. His father was a laborer on the Eastern railway and lived in a little hut near the Ferrieres road. His mother guarded the gate. He used to see her with her calico mantle wrapped around her, a leathern bonnet on her head, take her place before the trains, with her little red signal flag in hand whenever a train rushed by.

Up to his fourteenth year, little Pierre lived with his parents, free and careless, helping his mother to roll back the heavy gate when the farmers were returning from the market of Lagny, cracking their whips to call attention to let them pass. His horizon was bounded by the gravelled line, with its crossed ties and double steel-track polished by the friction of the wheels, and the reverberating wires of the telegraph overhead that during the winter nights chanted in the wind like an Æolian harp. His sole recreation consisted in the movement of the trains, puffing forth their dense smoke and flinging their burning sparks on the trembling soil as they rushed past.

He could neither read nor write, and to all appearances was destined to pass his life as an obscure laborer. He gave no evidence of any peculiar talent. He did not, like Pascal, instinctively trace geometrical lines on the sand. He did not knead the slaty clay into marvellous figures like Canova. He was very boyish in his play, excelled in killing birds with stones, and placing snares in the hedges along the railway to catch the hares in the neighboring grounds. No prophetic mark was on his brow. A simple accident decided his vocation.

In backing on to a side-track, a freight train crashed into a passenger car. There were some killed and several wounded. It was late in the evening and quite dark. From the capsized and wrecked cars there arose the heart-rending cries of the wounded and maimed for help. All the employés were hurrying hither and thither in confusion, scarce knowing what they were about; little Pierre alone had the presence of mind to run for a doctor. He returned with him in his buggy, having explained the situation to him in a few clear, brief words. Astonished at the cool lucidity and exactness of the youngster's explanation, the doctor employed him as an attendant while succoring the wounded. He noticed him sponge the blood, without a tremor, from a fireman whose arm he had amputated near the shoulder. With an energy that seemed begotten of insensibility, the lad assisted at the operations, never losing his head, executing, point by point, everything he was ordered, and lending his help with uncommon skill.

"Well, well," exclaimed the doctor to himself, "there is a young lad that would become a famous operator if he were only taught surgery! What do you do, my boy?"

"Nothing."

"That's not much. At your age one ought to have an idea of something. What would you like to be?"

"I don't know."

"Have you a father and mother?"

"Yes, they live there."

And he pointed toward the little hut whose lighted window shone in the darkness.

"Ah! you are little Rameau. Your parents are good, honest people; I will talk to them. Do you know my name?"

"Yes. You are Dr. Servant, of Lagny."

"Well, then, come and see me to-morrow before eight o'clock. I'll try and make something out of you."

He first sent him to school, to which this little semi-savage, brought up in all the freedom of outdoor life, had

great difficulty in accustoming himself. Not that he lacked application. He had been seized from the first day with a passionate desire to learn everything. But his bounding blood used to rush in waves to his face, causing him to turn purple and suffer the most violent of headaches. This good patron, Dr. Servant, was often greatly pained on witnessing these obstacles of nature thrown in the path of the child. But Pierre continued his studies without complaint or murmur, making the most rapid progress from day to day. At the end of a year he was, to the joyous surprise of the district teacher, in a condition to compete for a burse entrance in the College of Meaux. And he won it. From this time forth he advanced with giant strides. Impelled by the doctor, encouraged by the Prefect of the Department he represented, that looked forward to great things from him, he passed his primary examinations and was admitted, at the age of twenty, both to the Ecole Polytechnique and the Ecole Normale. But despite the persuasion of the Prefect and the entreaties of his teachers, he did not enter either the one or the other. He listened to only one advice, that of Dr. Servant, who first brought him out of the night of his ignorance, and who now said to him, "Be a physician. Give back to your fellow-men what I have given to you. Devote the genius, with which you are unquestionably endowed, to the service of humanity."

After having sustained, with great brilliancy, his medical thesis on graduating, he was received as a candidate for the Faculty, and prepared for professorial duties, toward which he was invincibly attracted. An aggressive mind, devoted to progress, he was always seeking the unknown. He plunged passionately into the study of chemistry. He even studied the alchemists—Van Helmont, Valentin, Paracelsus. He knew how to extract from their works all that was valuable, and to leave aside all their cabalistic mysteries. In the small apartment that he occupied, on the fifth floor, Rue de la Harpe, he had transformed the

kitchen into a laboratory, and he made his experiments on the stove that he had skilfully arranged for the purpose. At night his neighbors saw the little window aglow with fantastic lights. And his good bourgeois neighbors regarded him with dread as he passed along the stairway, wrapped up in a long, black redingote, his hair straggling from under his huge hat, leaving a vague resemblance to the Hofmanesque Doctor Miracle.

It was at the competition for the professorship that his combative nature first asserted itself in all its aggressive violence. He astounded the examiners by the boldness of his views and the novelty of his observations. This young man dared to advance before his teachers theories which meant the formal negation of admitted doctrines. He defended his opinions with a harsh and trenchant eloquence that made the Faculty squirm and that elicited the enthusiastic applause of the audience.

Dr. Rameau's reformatory ideas were highly displeasing ; he was regarded as a rebel to science. He was represented as an ambitious disturber, capable, if he assumed a chair in the Faculty, of overturning the accepted ideas of the institution. His teachers, deeply wounded at being dominated by him, placed him on the index. He was twice rejected. In violation of all justice he was passed over in favor of fellow-students whose mediocrity would not be found embarrassing. Rameau was chafed with anger. And from that moment the battle was begun between his masters and himself.

Angered beyond endurance, while still continuing to prepare for his new examination, he published some pamphlets that began to draw on him the attention of the medical world. Throughout Europe his works were commented on, and his books translated. The celebrated Professor Schultz, of the Faculty of Leipsic, wrote a brochure sustaining the views of the young French savant. The opposition of Rameau assumed the proportions of a schism. He had passionate partisans who went to the ex-

tremes of exaggeration. He was obliged in consequence to define the limit of his reforms. People began to consider him reasonable on seeing him curb the fanatics and blind partisans. Besides, his name had evoked too great a notoriety, and his detractors began to grow timid. The scientific press took up the disputed questions, and all those who opposed the doctrines of Rameau were treated as reactionaries. It became fashionable when talking of him to shake the head gravely, and say: "A remarkable genius, a little impetuous, but age will discipline his mind. A man who cannot be passed over." In short, a regular republican and free-thinking agitation sprang up around Rameau. And timid people, speaking of him, were wont to whisper, "He is a revolutionist and an atheist."

A revolutionist he certainly was in his art, but not otherwise. He entertained a thorough contempt for everything appertaining to present day politics. One of the chiefs of the Radical movement, wishing to turn the popularity of the young scientist to the profit of his party, asked him, on one occasion, why, considering his great talents, he did not take part in politics. Rameau looked him full in the face and brusquely answered, "Because the task would be too easy!"

As to his atheism, it was real, but not aggressive. He did not trouble himself concerning the belief of his neighbors. He had his own opinions on the subject, but he never sought to impose them on anybody else. He did not conceal the fact that he disbelieved the teachings of religion, and on Sundays, at Lagny, in the little house of Dr. Servant, seated at table with his benefactor, he allowed himself to be drawn into friendly controversy by the old physician, who was a firm believer, like all those who live in the immense bosom of the country, where the harmony of nature bursts forth in its sovereign fullness to the view. But he disliked religious discussion. He listened, with a tranquil smile, to the violent attacks of the good old man,

and when he felt too keenly the barb of an epigram, he shrugged his huge shoulders like a lion teased by a gnat, and answered good-naturedly as he lifted his glass :

“Your health, Doctor. I will believe in God, if he grants me the pleasure of seeing you live to celebrate your hundredth birthday.”

Evidently Providence does not engage in propagandism, for Dr. Servant died in his seventieth year, sincerely mourned by Dr. Rameau, and leaving behind him one son, a captain of artillery.

The only person with whom Rameau made unreservedly free was his friend Talvanne, a physician like himself, and a son of the celebrated alienist. Talvanne, destined to succeed his father in the direction of the asylum of Vincennes, was a man of profound and comprehensive knowledge, especially on the subject of anthropology. His taste for craniometrical investigation amounted almost to a mania. It was not an uncommon thing to see him, in the midst of a body of students, rise, draw from his pocket a goniometer, a sort of compass with long indicators, along which a graduated rule operated, and seizing hold of the head of one of his comrades measure his bumps, and then gravely remark :

“Parietal angle almost imperceptible, brachycephalic, added to a slight widening of the bump and of the zygomatic arches. An Auvergnat skull, my good man !”

And then, amid loud derisive laughter, everybody would cry out :

“Bravo, anthropologist !”

Talvanne had made a considerable collection of skulls, and he was wont to make frequent experiments, by way of determining the cerebral capacity of the specimens. He would fill one skull with water, according to the method of Saumarez, Vitrey, and Treadwell ; another with mercury according to that of Broca ; another with sand, like Hamilton ; with millet, like Mantegazza ; with white mustard-seed, like Philipps ; and with small shot, like Morton. And

when one entered the spacious laboratory that he occupied in his father's house, he found skulls everywhere, on the tables, on the chairs, on the chimney, on the clock ; a skull even served for a tobacco-box. Everything in anywise connected with craniometry interested Talvanne. He even collected the paper rings with which fitters and hatters take the measure of the heads of their customers. He averred that he thus obtained some curious results by way of comparison.

Brought up in the midst of a family that lived amid bourgeois surroundings, where advanced ideas were not accepted, and watched over by a pious mother, Talvanne retained the fundamental truth of his religious belief unshaken through all his scientific studies. An ardent defender of evolution, he was a deist. And when Rameau by chance would intimate his disbelief in the existence of God, the most violent discussions used to take place, in which Talvanne felt his bourgeois instincts revolt against the theories of the materialist, at the same time that his scientific impulses tended toward the opinions he combated. But the bourgeois cause always came out victorious, and as his indignation increased in proportion to the weakness of his conviction, he usually finished by overwhelming Rameau with abuse. But the discussion always began quietly.

"Religion," Talvanne would say, "is the distinguishing characteristic of man. The human being feeling his weakness experiences the need of believing in a superior power that has not been revealed to him."

"If it is not revealed to him, who can prove that it exists?"

"That innate sentiment that is found among all the inhabitants of the earth, white, black, red or yellow, and which makes them adore somebody or something, God, fire, the sun, a serpent, or a stone."

"Superstition, mental weakness."

"Without religion it is impossible to govern man."

"I admit that, certainly. Are not the three determining motives of religious ideas fear, admiration, and gratitude? That is why your ministers of religion have ever on their lips hell to terrify, miracles to astonish, and divine mercy to attract us. They rely on ignorance and human cowardice. What is at the bottom of it all? Charlatanism!"

At such a point as this, Talvanne would invariably lose his temper and exclaim:

"Blind as you may be, you cannot deny that, at all events, there has been a creative power."

"I do not deny it, I simply analyze it, and I find this creative force in a latent state in matter. All organic forms are born of one another by insensible modifications."

"But there is a design in nature," Talvanne would reply. "We must admit the final causes. Everything has been made for the use of man by a celestial architect."

Rameau would then rise and pace the room, shaking his shaggy head.

"If everything has been made for the use of man, why are there noxious animals, poisonous plants, terrestrial cataclysms? Why do diseases exist? Ah! yes, you will explain that by telling me of a punishment inflicted on man; you will relate to me the account of an earthly paradise, of Adam and Eve, the history of the first sin, the inventions of the theologians! Disease is as old as life, as palæontology demonstrates. You will talk to me of the utility of the organs and of their adaptation to a definite end! But comparative anatomy shows us a great number of rudimentary organs which, useful for one species, are wholly useless for others: for instance, a man's nipples, a whale's teeth. What do you say of hermaphroditism? What about monsters? There are in nature perfectly formed animals born without a head, and for which life is an impossibility. Why were they created? The truth is, that the forces of matter in their accidental meeting, have given birth to innumerable forms; and of all these forms those only survive which are, in some manner, adapted to the conditions of the surround-

ings in which they are placed. Those having resisted, are developed and evolved."

"Oh! on that point we are agreed," Talvanne would break in with delight; "evolution is my hobby, but it does not exclude the idea of a Creator."

"But, you simpleton, what is the use of a Creator, when his utility is not demonstrated? You must really have a Creator, with a big beard and a thunderbolt in his hand. What is that mania for adoration you are possessed of? It is that absurd human weakness which wishes to cling to a superior power, like a drowning man to a straw. The passion of being governed, and especially of avoiding responsibility. If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, would it not? Well, let me say one thing to you: if your God does exist, he is a monster who has created us for our misfortune and who rejoices in our misery. And as I do not wish to give utterance to such an impious accusation, I prefer to believe in the natural fecundity of matter."

Rameau, with a rude eloquence, developed his thought, adducing the newest philosophic ideas, and with the cold precision of an operator carving the living flesh, clipped the wings of the spiritual aspirations of his friend. And so, far into the night, Talvanne would sit by the corner of the fire listening to Rameau, wounded in his sentiments, to be sure, but amazed at the savant's comprehensive grasp of his subject, and paying homage to that luminous intellect which, in whatever direction the chance of life might lead it, would achieve distinction.

And now a third party is to be introduced to share the close friendship of these two young friends. On the same floor occupied by Rameau, on the Rue La Harpe, lived a young German painter, Frantz Munzel, who had come from Stuttgart to follow the course of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He was taciturn, retired, and appeared to be wholly immersed in his work. Every evening he could be heard playing on the piano selections from Haydn and

Mozart. He was evidently of a mild and timid disposition. Rameau knew that he was a painter, inasmuch as he had often met him in the street, with his canvas under his arm and his box of colors in his hand. But the two neighbors had never exchanged words. They bowed in passing, and that was all. They did not even know one another by name. Whenever Rameau incidentally spoke of Munzel, he simply referred to him as the painter near by.

One day Munzel returned from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts looking very pale. That evening he did not play his accustomed sonata. He went to bed suffering from an intense fever. The following morning he was seized with angina that at once assumed a most serious character. His studio comrades bound him, one morning, to the model-table, by way of a joke, during an intense cold. Three days subsequently the malady had assumed what appeared to be a fatal turn. The unfortunate young man lay at the point of death. The local physician had just left after remarking to the concierge that there was no hope, and that any operation would be in vain. In this extremity, the latter knocked at Rameau's door.

The doctor was working in his room, without any fire, his legs wrapped up in his bed coverlet, preparing one of the theses that had caused him so much discussion. He arose silently and, hearing the sick man breathing heavily in the obscurity of his chamber, took up his lamp and approached the bed. The congested face, the swollen neck, the sunken eyes told that the unfortunate man was suffocating.

"He will not last an hour," remarked Rameau, after a cursory examination. "The membranes are affected to the nasal ducts. However, I will try tracheotomy."

He returned with a bistoury, and cutting the flesh with a firm hand he inserted a canula in the throat, and the grateful, vivifying air filled the lungs of the dying man.

"His family must now be notified."

"He has none. He is alone in Paris—a stranger."

Rameau cast a glance at the pale brow crowned with

blonde curls, and approaching the bed once more carefully felt the skull.

"According to Camper, we have to do with a subbrachycephalus. Is your tenant a German?"

"Yes, doctor, but he speaks French fluently," replied the concierge, who did not understand the import of the question asked.

"Well, subbrachycephalus and German," remarked Rameau, "that is something to give Talvanne pleasure."

During the continuance of the malady Rameau never quitted Munzel. He was at the same time physician and nurse. He worked during the day on the corner of the table, in the Wurtemburger's chamber, and at night he read, taking notes by the light of the lamp, while his patient slept. "Do you hear him," he proudly remarked to Talvanne, who had come to see what had happened to his friend; "he breathes better than he did that morning, eh?"

So long as Frantz was confined to his bed, and Rameau's attention bore a professional character, Talvanne evinced a real sympathy for the patient. He took the doctor's place beside him, and watched over him without feeling his cranium or measuring the nasal angle. He acted, not through love of science, but love of humanity. When the patient had recovered, however, and Rameau's interest in him assumed a friendly character, Talvanne's feelings toward the painter cooled perceptibly. The affection which the young alienist entertained toward him whom he regarded as one of the glories of French medical science was too keen not to stimulate jealousy. It required the exercise of all the authority that Rameau possessed over the mind of Talvanne to induce the latter to accept Frantz's companionship. And thenceforth began an intimacy among the three that was often subjected, however, to rude shocks.

The German dreamer added a new element to the intimate friendship of Talvanne and Rameau. He was of a profoundly mystic nature. He had retained in his imagination something of the shade of the lofty Gothic cathedrals

of his native land. And, through that shade, flitted, radiant and charming, the sacred golden nimbus of the cathedral windows and the white fays of the legends of the Rhine. Rameau used to say smilingly, "Munzel is a paganized Christian." But he yielded a special indulgence to the young man's ideas that almost put Talvanne beside himself with anger. Whenever a lively controversy on a religious subject took place, and Munzel and Rameau disagreed, the doctor would soften his tone, modify his phrases, and smooth the angles of his arguments, as if loth to wound the sensibilities of his friend. In vain Talvanne would mutter :

"But you do not argue with him, you beg from him, you drag yourself at his feet. Why do you spare him so? He is no longer sick."

But Rameau remained deaf to these upbraidings. Then the alienist would take up Munzel's subject on his own account, and substitute for the dreamy argument of the German his own aggressive dialectics. Immediately Rameau would be aroused, and Talvanne, after a rough handling, would end by paying the price of his temerity. The powerful voice of the doctor would thunder, flinging his violent, destructive phrases pell-mell, overwhelming all opposition and rebutting every argument. It would require the musical talent of Frantz to calm Rameau, and the doctor, regretful at having allowed himself to be carried away by impulse, and fearful of having ruffled the feelings of his friend, would apologize by saying :

"It is all the fault of that imbecile, Talvanne."

"Of me? I only repeated what Munzel had said," the alienist would hypocritically reply.

"Oh! enough. You bore us. A glass of bier, Frantz. And then you will play us a piece from Mendelssohn."

And thus the evening would close pleasantly, the German, with eyes turned heavenward, playing the airs which had rocked his infancy, and seeming to follow, in the vagueness of his recollections, the slow and dreamy step of some fair, sweet blonde, who awaited him far away.

He must indeed have had some tender engagement, to which he wished to remain faithful, as Rameau knew him to have kept aloof from all female society. He would not talk willingly of his family matters, and his friend could never elicit from him anything touching his affairs of the heart. He went away every year, in July, to pass a few weeks at Stuttgart, with his father, who was a professor on the piano and the inventor of a new method of solfeggio. He used to return melancholy and emaciated, as if he had been dwelling in a place where the guests were too many and the repasts too frugal. He worked hard, without ardor, without enthusiasm, but with an unvarying regularity. A pupil of Flandrin, he retained a certain native dryness in his method of work that savored of the Dusseldorf school. But he could design a picture harmoniously and paint it with *éclat*. He excelled in portrait painting, and was beginning to make money.

Still, his mode of living did not change. He retained his modest apartment in the Rue La Harpe; and, if he hired a splendid studio near the Luxembourg, it was to impress his patrons and attract customers. But he did not seem to grow richer. He denied himself all pleasures, and led a life severe in its simplicity. Rameau remarked:

"There must be some mysterious hole in that young man's pocket, where his money disappears."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Talvanne, "he is simply a miser. The hole leads to his money-box."

It required six years to discover the mystery. One day while reading a German newspaper Rameau's eye fell on the name Munzel. It was a summary of Court news, and it appeared by the article that Otto Munzel, professor of music, was defeated in his claim to the method of solfeggio by signs, and considered as having appropriated the rights of the Pfeiffer Brothers, the sole inventors of the method in question; and it was furthermore added that the said Munzel was mulcted in the sum of ten thousand marks damages, and commanded to publish the same in six journals, etc.

Two days passed without Frantz having put in an appearance. In vain did Rameau knock at the door of the painter's apartments; there was no answer. The doctor, feeling uneasy, repaired to the studio near the Luxembourg. He entered without knocking, and found Munzel stretched on a sofa, looking dreamily into vacancy. A half-finished picture rested on the easel, dry and dusty, as if it had not been touched by the brush in some time. The young man did not rise on the doctor's entrance. He simply turned his head, with a faint smile of welcome. Without speaking a word, Rameau walked over to the sofa, and, drawing forth the journal, pointed out the article mentioned. Frantz read, glanced over it hastily, turned ghastly pale, and, rising, almost fell into his friend's arms.

Here was doubtless the cause of his secret trouble. This explained how the artist's savings had mysteriously disappeared. For ten years the lawsuit pressed by the Pfeiffers against Munzel, senior, had been carried from court to court, and the expenses ate up all the resources of the family. They lived on the scantiest fare all the year round, in order to meet the expenses of the trial. But the elder Munzel was full of hope, and used to say to his wife and children: "When I shall have won, my method will give me at once fame and fortune." And in the interval between his music-lessons, he would hasten to his lawyer with some new point for his defence.

The loss of the case, certain, irremediable, was an overwhelming blow to the family. To pay the ten thousand marks, they would be compelled to sell their scanty furniture, the piano—in short, all they possessed. A terrible misfortune for this struggling family, a burden under which Frantz for the past two days had been prostrated. He had in his drawer five hundred francs that the merchant from whom he bought his colors advanced him, but not a picture to sell. For a long time past he had sold all his paintings as soon as finished, at the lowest prices, as the money was sorely needed. What was he to do? He

could not leave the family starve and his father go to prison. It would, he knew, be the death of the good old man. He must come to his aid. And for forty-eight hours, stretched on the sofa, he had been turning in his mind, day and night, this distressing problem, vainly seeking a solution.

Rameau placed his huge hand on Frantz's shoulder, and earnestly exclaimed :

"This, then, is the cause of all your privations? Well, do not be troubled, my friend ; we will find the money. I have three or four thousand francs in my room, and as for the rest, leave it to me."

The rest he borrowed from Talvanne, who was deeply chagrined at having misjudged the unfortunate artist.

"If he has not the bump of avarice," he remarked, however, "he has that of ingratitude. Mark his head. It is a regular model of its kind. After having studied such a head, instead of opening his heart to its possessor, a wise man would shut it against him."

"Ah ! You bore me with your craniology," rudely snapped Rameau. "Instead of reducing all individual conformations to special types, you stray away completely. You will end by being as great a lunatic as your own patients."

But Talvanne held his opinion.

"Well, well ; we will see. The future will give you a lesson concerning the gratitude of that man."

Despite the diagnosis of Talvanne, the years passed by without anything intervening to mar the harmony of their friendship. Each continued to score new triumphs. Talvanne succeeded his father and became the great authority on medical jurisprudence, whose sole weakness was to see irresponsibility in every criminal. Munzel became—thanks to the immense influence of Rameau—a painter of great prominence. All three advanced on the path of fame and fortune.

Rameau was then a professor of anatomy, and had en-

tered the Medical Academy. His influence in the scientific world was undisputed. He was as much admired as feared. With singular energy, he had surmounted every obstacle in his path. He was a terror to his opponents. He had the audacity to attempt anything, and the genius to accomplish it. There was not a scientist living who did not bear the marks of his blows. He had taken them one by one, each in his own sphere, and proven himself their master. He was gentle only with the weak and humble. But the proud and presumptuous he tore to pieces with a savage joy.

He rarely mingled in society. His brusque manner was not adapted to the stiff conventionalities of the salon, and his voice was not cultivated to that commonplace softness which befits murmured conversation. When he was thrown into society, he was ill at ease, taciturn and retiring, and if he was perchance drawn out, he talked with a passionate eloquence which always astonished and frequently shocked his auditors. He was everywhere regarded as an original character. People used to say of him: "His brain is a little off, but that is the invariable penalty of genius. But what a wonderful surgeon and what an admirable physician he is! He saves all his patients!"

On Sundays he dined with Munzel, and on Thursdays with Talvanne. These were his recreation days. Between his two friends he forgot all the cares of his life, devoted as it was to incessant labor. His brow gleamed, he gave free reign to his fancy, and his powerful imagination, slightly Rabelaisian at times, burst forth in the most entertaining conversation. He delighted in guying Talvanne, and uttered the most astounding paradoxes, which the simple-minded alienist undertook to refute with a tenacity that immensely tickled Rameau's sense of humor.

Talvanne had published a work entitled "Races and Descent," in which he had recorded a long series of craniometrical observations, by means of which he pretended to establish a sure rule of genealogy. A child, born of such

a father, belonging to such a race, and of such a mother, belonging to another race, should, according to his doctrine, have a head of a certain conformation, and it was easy, on examination, to discover on his skull the traces of the generations from which he had sprung. This method, presented by the alienist in a most ingenious manner, had attracted attention. The *Revue Anthropologique* discussed it at much length. It was the great subject of controversy between Talvanne and Rameau. The latter took a malignant pleasure in bringing up the subject, spreading snares for his friend and experiencing the delight of a school-boy when he fell into them.

"Here is a child," Rameau would say, "of the Spanish race, born with an occiput of that type; his nurse does not like a head of that kind, and with her hands she shapes the little cranium, soft as wax, and makes it as round as the head of a Norman. What becomes of your theory then? Where do you find the traces of descent? You are given the head of this Spaniard for examination when an adult. You measure it, and then gravely declare that he was born at Yvetot."

"You are absurd," Talvanne would growl.

"That is easily said. But the fact remains that your method is not absolute. The results you deduce vary. Your observations are amusing, but valueless."

"Amusing! They are rigorously, undeniably exact. That is, so far as generalities are concerned. If you wish to seek exceptions, you can find them in everything. And as the saying runs, they prove the rule."

Despite this raillery, however, Rameau warmly championed the candidacy of his friend for the Medical Academy. If he was pleased to deny, in friendly argument with Talvanne, the scientific value of the latter's doctrines, he proclaimed their merit in public. He had written an admirable preface for Talvanne's "Treatise on Mental Diseases," in which he discussed with matchless ability the question of hereditary insanity. The book had, thanks to

this splendid essay, obtained considerable success. Thus Rameau, excellent at heart, but galling in manner, while martyrizing Talvanne, wrought zealously for his fame.

This was the shining trait of Rameau's character. The philosophic grasp of his mind was boundless. Confident in himself, he enunciated his materialistic doctrines with the rude vigor of a Calvin. He overthrew every obstacle. His genius, like a devouring flame, consumed everything that sought to arrest its expansion, and his public profession of faith had all the more effect as he made it in an official capacity.

It was at the inauguration of the Society of Contemporary Philosophy, when responding to the flabby and empty address of the Minister of Public Instruction, that Rameau pronounced his celebrated discourse on the creation of man and the substance of the soul. He discussed the question in relation to the hypothesis of a soul essentially distinct from the body. And after discussing the facts with marvellous lucidity, he arrived at the conclusion that nothing in his physiological studies led him to admit the existence of a soul. And then, in a voice of thunderous tones, he attacked the whole system of theology, concluding with an absolute denial of the divinity and the glorification of his agnosticism.

Scarce had he finished speaking when a void was created around him. All the functionaries who occupied the stage disappeared with astonishing quickness. In a moment all that Rameau could see was their vanishing forms. A group surrounded the Minister, who appeared quite agitated, and such expressions as "a gross scandal," "whither are we drifting?" and so forth, could be heard. Rameau, shunned as one infected, walked out and entered his carriage. He met Talvanne, who was awaiting him and deeply grieved. The alienist could only say :

"Oh ! my friend, what a fatal use you make of your admirable talents. What monstrous doctrines you have enunciated !"

And filled at once with horror and admiration, and impelled by his warm friendship, the good Talvanne heartily shook the hand of the great man, who silently withdrew, amid official reprobation.

The following morning Rameau was informed that he was relieved of his duties as professor. He made no protest. He was an agitator in the world of ideas only. His removal caused a lively sensation in the students' quarter, where the discourse created a furor. Demonstrations were organized by the students, who assembled in crowds under the savant's window, and made the street ring with their cheers. But Rameau was deaf to these appeals and remained invisible. He had taken refuge with Munzel, and stretched on the artist's sofa smoked placidly while listening to his friend. The latter let his fingers wander over the keys of the large piano that flung to the sonorous and lofty roof the grave and tender melodies of his dreamy inspiration.

Driven from his professorial chair, Rameau engaged in the practice of his profession. This atheist, that the great pious world wished to exorcise, was nevertheless invariably summoned whenever a serious case occurred. People used to say, "He has signed a compact with Satan." But a cure, even if it come from Hades, is still a cure, and the sick do not care by what means they are made well.

Rameau's practice brought him in over two hundred thousand francs a year. He had acquired a fortune, but, with his simple tastes, did not know how to enjoy it. Talvanne tried to make him believe that he should live on a grander scale. He wished him to remove to more sumptuous quarters, but Rameau persistently refused. He continued to occupy the house on the Rue La Harpe; the only change he made was in moving from the fifth to the first floor. He there occupied five rooms, which he found amply sufficient. He used the parlor as an office, and, about four o'clock, his consultation time, even the ante-chamber used to be crowded with people. His servant gave tickets

to all as they entered, and rich and poor had to await their turn alike. Frequently the most fashionable of carriages could be seen drawn up before the door, while the coachmen, dressed in their dazzling uniforms, looked down with disdain on the muddy street that contrasted so vilely with the cleanly-swept thoroughfares of the aristocratic quarters.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE.

HOWEVER, Providence, as Talvanne said, or Chance, as Rameau replied, was preparing to modify the latter's existence. One day, during consultation hours, a woman of apparently forty years of age, dressed like a middle-class servant, and carrying a dripping umbrella, presented herself at the house and asked to see Dr. Rameau immediately. The valet, in his black suit and white cravat, like a ministerial officer, handed her a ticket, and opened the door of an adjoining room, in which were fifteen persons waiting silently and patiently. The woman uttered an exclamation, and took a step backward. The servant shut the door and politely said :

"If you think you will have to wait too long, come back to-morrow, but two hours earlier."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the woman, clasping her hands, with an expression of blank despair. "But it will be too late, perhaps, this evening. I must talk with the doctor right away."

"That's impossible!"

"My mistress must die, then, without assistance. Dear me! What will mademoiselle say?"

She sat down wholly overcome, and burst into tears, which she wiped away with her apron, apparently oblivious of her surroundings.

"But, madame," ventured the valet, somewhat touched, despite his habitual coolness in presence of the human suffering that he daily witnessed.

The ring of a bell interrupted him, and leaving the afflicted lady, he opened the door and waited to escort out the person who had been in consultation with the doctor. Within the obscurity of the room the huge form of Rameau appeared. He was speaking a few parting words with his patient.

The weeping woman outside raised her head. With that intuition which trouble lends, she guessed that the stranger within was the savior whose services she had come to seek, and rising quickly she rushed into the office. Rameau regarded her with an amused smile, and in a pleasant voice said :

"Well, my good lady, what can I do for you?"

"Ah! my dear sir," answered the woman, excitedly, "you are Dr. Rameau, are you not?"

"I am."

"It is Heaven that inspired me to rush in to you. Oh! dear. Your servant told me that I should have to wait, or else come back to-morrow. Just as if death would wait!"

"Death?"

"Yes, my good sir, death! Our physician has said it; it is only a question of hours. If the operation is not performed this evening, my mistress will not survive the night. And it seems there is nobody but you who can do it. Mademoiselle cried to me, 'Run for Dr. Rameau, and be sure you bring him. Promise him anything he wants. We will sell the furniture, if necessary, to pay him. But mother must be saved!'"

Rameau knit his brow. The woman saw a shadow pass over his grave countenance. She blushed and said, confusedly :

"Pardon me. I am so troubled that I say everything as it comes to my mind. But I am sorry if I have annoyed you."

Rameau made a careless gesture.

"Are the people poor?" he asked.

"Alas! yes, the dear ladies, though they were once in high position. That makes their present situation all the harder. But they are so good that one could die for them. And mademoiselle is so sweet and lovely! Ah! doctor, if you only knew her!"

"What is the matter with the sick woman?"

"Oh! it is some gangrenous trouble. At first they treated her for rheumatism of the shoulder, and the next day she was at the point of death. Ah! sir, if she had been still wealthy, she would not have been left to go to death's door for want of proper treatment. But if the poor die, no one cares."

Rameau shook his head, and softly answered:

"No, my good woman. That is not so."

He rang a bell; his valet appeared.

"Bring me my hat."

"Oh! heaven! You are coming, then?" cried out the woman, in joyous surprise. "Wait; I will go and get a cab!"

"No; my carriage is outside," replied Rameau, with a smile; "we can go all the quicker. Where do you live?"

"The Boulevard des Batignolles."

"But," interposed the valet, "there are people in the parlor who have been waiting since morning."

"Tell them to come back to-morrow," replied Rameau.

He picked up his case of instruments, and, followed by the woman, stepped briskly out.

At the corner of the Rue des Batignolles, near the hot-baths establishment, whose imposing façade looks out on the boulevard, stands a five-story house, whose paint, washed away by the rains and blackened by the beating of carpets, gives the building, naked and desolate as it is, a look of squalid misery. A narrow door opens into a flagged corridor, which passes by the room of the concierge, and leads to a stairway whose green painted walls

were scaling off from the dampness. A dim light guides one to the head of the rickety stairway. The steps are rough with the layers of mud that have accumulated on them from the daily passage up and down of the hundreds of occupants of this tenement-hive.

The servant, ascending ahead of Rameau with the rapidity of a person whose feet know every inch of the stairway, stopped from time to time, with anxiety, saying :

“Be careful, there is a turn there ; hold on to the banister.”

She looked as if she wished she could lift up in her arms the savior she had triumphantly brought with her. On the fourth floor she stopped, and, drawing forth a key, she opened a door which bore a brass plate with the words, “Mme. Etchevarray, Modes,” engraved on it. Nothing could be more saddening than that attractive and pompous sign, “Modes,” on this miserable plate, in this house that reeked with squalor. What bonnets, alas ! they make in this quarter, where the women go around bareheaded or with a calico handkerchief tied about their ears. A sad trade that could not support the toiler !

The entrance apartment was a dining-room, black and smoky, furnished with a walnut table, four chairs, and a sideboard, which bore the remains of a meagre meal. Faded cotton curtains hung on the windows that looked on the yard. The occupants of the other rooms had hung out on their windows to dry dish-cloths and wash-rags, from which emanated the unsavory odors of the sink.

Rameau took in the entire surroundings at a glance, while the servant passed quickly into an adjoining room. An exclamation was heard, and in a door which suddenly opened the doctor beheld the most radiant incarnation of living beauty that ever met his vision. He felt his hands pressed by another pair of nervous and warm palms, and he heard a sweet voice which said :

“Ah ! sir, how thankful we are to you !”

And, without having had time to say a word in reply,

he found himself led to the foot of a bed on which lay a pale and emaciated woman. There the professional instinct at once took possession of Rameau ; his eyes recovered their wonted clearness, the humming in his ears ceased. He became once more the great physician, of unerring glance. He forgot everything that did not appertain to his patient.

"It is behind the neck, doctor, between the shoulder and the nape," the sweet voice again said.

He began an examination of the suffering woman. Completely prostrated, she could only moan, without power to utter a word. Huge beads of perspiration shone on her forehead, jaundiced and seared with suffering. The arteries of her arm, which hung over the side of the bed, palpitated violently. A purple swelling, beneath the right ear, protruded from the bandages wrapped around the neck. With delicate touch, Rameau removed the bandages, and his countenance assumed a grave aspect.

"How is it that the disease was allowed to develop to such a degree?" he asked.

He drew back a few steps, and, turning toward the servant who had summoned him:

"Make me some bandages," he said.

And, placing his hat on the table, he took up his case of instruments, and withdrew to the adjoining room.

"Doctor, are you going to operate on mother immediately?" the young girl inquired, with evident emotion.

Rameau raised his eyes and saw that she was deathly pale.

"Isn't it for that you sent for me?" he answered, in a softened tone.

"Is it as serious as our own physician represented it to be?"

"It is very serious, mademoiselle."

"Oh, dear. But you see the weak condition mother is in. Could you not possibly defer it till to-morrow?"

"No, miss ; your mother's condition is of a most serious

character. She is suffering from a gangrenous anthrax, which has been allowed to extend almost to the carotid artery. Her recovery depends on a question of hours. This evening it would be perhaps too late !”

The young girl was prostrated ; she trembled violently, and stood leaning on the table with her head bowed on her bosom. Rameau could not help gazing at her. She was of medium height, willowy, and possessing that nonchalant grace of the women of the South. Her dark complexion was brightened by the ruby freshness of her lips and the brilliancy of her dark eyes. Her black, wavy hair covered a somewhat low forehead, marked by dark, haughty eyebrows. Her entire person exhibited an elegance and distinction of the rarest type. She was one of those women who, no matter in what situation the caprice of fate might have placed her, would command superiority. Even in this humble dwelling, dressed in a shabby robe of gray woollen, she presented the air of a queen.

“ Will the operation last long ? ” she asked.

“ Yes, miss. Your mother must be anæsthetized. You will, therefore, please send for your family physician to assist me.”

The servant went for the physician in question, but he did not come for two hours. Rameau, having returned to the sick-room, where the patient was sleeping soundly, began to converse in low tones with the young girl. He did not for a moment think of leaving. He could, had he so desired, employ the interval in making some urgent visits to his patients. But a secret charm retained him. In the growing darkness he could no longer clearly distinguish surrounding objects. A vague shadow gathered around him. The silhouette of the young girl was darkly carved on the window, lit up by the lamp from the street. They continued their conversation,—he quite fatherly, with his grave voice ; she all simplicity, but feeling an emotion that she vainly tried to conceal. Her nerves, strained for a week by uneasiness and fatigue, suddenly

relaxed, and in the darkness beside the bed of her dying mother, in company with this illustrious savant, whom she regarded as a savior, she allowed herself to unveil all the misfortunes and misery of her life.

Her name was Conchita, and she was the daughter of José Etchevarray, a Spanish captain, who had escaped into France with the broken remains of a Carlist force that had been crushed by the soldiers of Isabella. Her mother had brought her to Carcassonne, where the French Government had interned the refugees. She was then seven years of age. Her father had accepted a situation as bookkeeper in a large wine-house. And in this beautiful country, under the blue sky, almost like that of her own Spain, they lived in quiet happiness. The war over, and the confinement having ceased, the Carlist captain removed to Paris, where he hoped to obtain, through his connections, a desirable situation. But the fraternity of the camp had disappeared with the uniform. The chiefs of the insurrectionary movement who had taken refuge at Paris received coldly the soldier of their lost cause. They talked abundantly of the sufferings so nobly borne by their partisans. They knew of numbers of brave men deserving of their assistance, and in a much worse plight than the captain. Unquestionably they appreciated his services, and they would leave no means unused to secure him employment. But it required time. The disappointed Carlist, seeing no hope of assistance, and regretting the loss of his position in Carcassonne, bravely undertook to support his wife and child by giving lessons in Spanish. His wife, who was clever in her way, sought employment in the establishment of a fashionable modiste, and thus by constant effort, though not without many privations, the family managed to support themselves.

For ten years their life passed without vicissitudes or accidents, monotonous and dull—the father every morning starting out to give his lessons, the mother seating herself at the table, and with her agile fingers fashioning her

laces, silks, and satins. When fourteen years of age, Conchita began to assist her mother. She excelled in shaping bonnets, and in gracefully placing a bird amid the trimmings of a hat. This little girl, who had seen nothing, who was denied the influences of a life of refinement, possessed an innate taste that was the envy and admiration of many. She soon attracted the attention of the modiste for whom she worked. This lady desired to take her into her shop, and offered her brilliant inducements. But Etchevarray refused. His daughter as she grew up became more and more charming. He saw her bloom fresh and fair as the flowers of her native land. He would not consent to her leaving his home, fearful of the dangerous influences of the workshop and the freedom of the streets. But to make the most of Conchita's skill, he took up his residence in the Rue Taitbout in a small apartment on the ground-floor, where he opened a millinery shop. There the two women toiled with all the more industry as they were now working for themselves. For five years the little business prospered, and Madame Etchevarray had a fair run of custom, when the Carlist captain died suddenly of an aneurism.

The two women were now left to their own resources. Worn with grief, which she vainly tried to conceal from her daughter, the widow fell ill. She endeavored to struggle on, but exhausted herself in the effort. Cared for by Conchita and Rosalie, the devoted servant, who had accompanied the family since its departure from Carcassonne, Mme. Etchevarray recovered. But she had exhausted both her energies and her fortitude. She remained whole days, she who was formerly so industrious, with her eyes fixed on vacancy, and her needle lying idle between her fingers. If her daughter spoke to her, she started and recovered herself slowly, as if coming back from a realm of dreams. In vain Conchita redoubled her efforts, working night and day; the patronage so painfully secured gradually disappeared. Want, at length, entered the little

dwelling. The creditors became more exacting. Finally, after two years of a painful and futile struggle, the brass plate, *Mme. Etchevarray, Modes*, which ornamented the door of the little shop in the Rue Taitbout, was nailed to the door of the fourth floor of the house in the Rue des Batignolles.

And in this crowded quarter, far removed from the fashionable centre, the two women led a melancholy existence, obliged to work once more for strangers, without the hope of ever again climbing the ascent from which they had been so suddenly precipitated. And now the widow was taken ill, and Conchita, pressed between the exigencies of her daily task and the absorbing care of her mother, had seen their debts increase day by day, and the pawn-tickets in the drawer replacing every article of any value that remained in the house. And powerless to struggle longer against these accumulated misfortunes, the young girl had heard with anguish the physician who attended her mother talk of a serious operation that would have to decide the life or the death of the patient.

In the darkness, which was now complete, Rameau had listened to this sad recital, broken by the tears of Conchita and her hopeless supplications. The heart of the illustrious physician was filled with profound pity. He, who had been for so long steeled to human suffering, was melted with compassion for that young girl, whom he had not known two hours before. His heart beat quicker, and a sudden fire burned in his breast. And he whose haughty irony had made the boldest wince, now felt himself grow timid.

These two hours of waiting had passed as if they were but moments ; when later on he endeavored to recall them, and to fix their details in his memory, he could only recollect a confused and sweet impression, the sensation of a delicious and irresistible enchantment. His first clear ideas after that meeting were the arrival of his confrère and the performance of the operation under the very eyes of Conchita.

He remembered seeing her pale and trembling, clinging to the bedstead for support, while the physician felt the pulse of the patient and administered the anæsthetic. Then a series of indifferent incidents, as far as himself was concerned—the instruments spread out on the table, the blood saturating the pillow, and the cries of the tender-hearted old servant, at the sight of her mistress lying as if dead under the pitiless knife. And then, the operation over, the hysteric tears of Conchita, who would not be comforted, and who, in the excess of her suffering, looked more charming than ever.

He left that humble home with regret, promising to return next day, and astounding his confrère, who knew his proverbial brusqueness, by the caressing tenderness of his words. And he did, in fact, return each day until the cure was complete. And never, indeed, was a patient treated like Mme. Etchevarray. Rameau not only ordered the medicines, and had them sent to the house to spare the faithful Rosalie the trouble of going for them; but he never came without the choicest fruits and the most beautiful flowers. One day he asked the servant concerning the pecuniary condition of the family, and after exacting a promise from her to say nothing about it, he offered all the money requisite for the needs of the household. This offer Rosalie indignantly refused, thereby greatly embarrassing the doctor. And she lost no time in relating the incident to Conchita and her mother.

“Do you know,” she began, “that he begged me to accept his money, saying that it could be paid back by and by, if you wished, but to say nothing about it to you at present. It was wrong in him to make such an offer. There is no doubt but that man loves mademoiselle. And he succeeds in everything he undertakes, too. He is not so old, either. And what a superb presence he has! But I refused his offer, as I did not know what his intentions were.”

“Oh! hold your tongue, Rosalie,” interrupted Conchita.

"You do not know what you are saying. The doctor is very good ; he has taken an interest in us. But now mamma is completely recovered and he will probably not trouble himself by coming to see us any more."

The following day Rameau found the two ladies a trifle cool and formal. They expressed their deepest gratitude to him for the care he had lavished on madame, and intimated to him that any more visits on his part would be as detrimental to him, by losing his valuable time, as embarrassing to them, who were unable to explain his kindness and assiduity. However, they hoped some day to be able to repay him. Meantime, Conchita offered him a charming little chiffonnier in antique silk, which she had secretly made with that intention. In the presence of this young girl, who offered this little present, with tears of gratitude, Rameau, for the first time in his life, was dumfounded. He stammered a few words of vague thanks, and turning around abruptly, hastily withdrew.

As he went along, having recovered from his confusion, he reproached himself in the following fashion: Why should he, at his age, plunge into a love affair, like a hare-brained young student? In his fiftieth year, with his hair turning gray, to fall in love with a little girl! As if he should yield to any other passion than that of science, the exclusive and jealous mistress that admits of no divided attentions. But while thus reasoning with himself, the sweet face of Conchita again appeared, with her dark eyes and wealth of wavy hair, and her rich, smiling lips. A tremor of pleasure passed through his veins, and he heaved a sigh at the thought of all the treasures that he disdained. He reached home. There, shaking his shoulders, as was his custom when he wished to put an end to a discussion with Talvanne, he muttered:

"Pshaw! To the deuce with the women! Think no more about them!"

And, bounding up-stairs four steps at a time, he plunged into his study, and was soon absorbed in his usual work.

He slept none that night. Buried in his huge arm-chair before his desk, which was littered with proof-sheets of a book that he had prepared for publication, he puffed his cigar, with his eyes fixed dreamily on space, repassing all the events of his life, and asking himself if he had not been the dupe of a chimera, in allowing himself to become exclusively absorbed in study and labor. The charm of home-life, the joy of mutual love, the pleasure of seeing himself perpetuated in his children, the tranquil happiness of the humblest of his fellow-men—he had disdained all. And what did he receive in compensation? An European reputation, honorary positions, titles, and decorations. But could he not have acquired all these just as surely by leading a married life? Would not quiet and tranquillity be as productive of results as agitation? Would the sentiments of the heart be prejudicial to the action of the brain? Like old Faust in his laboratory, he had before him, in the midst of his books, the agitating vision of the young girl, and a sigh of regret broke the stillness around him.

When morning came, he banished these thoughts, turned to his usual work, went his rounds, visited the hospital, and dined with Talvanne, whom he astonished by the brilliancy of his paradoxical imagination, that now seemed to be more extravagant than ever before. At length, about ten o'clock, this ardor having cooled, he stretched himself on the sofa, and, having rested in silence for a long space, arose with a dejected air and proceeded to his apartments.

For an entire week this mood continued, to the great anxiety of Talvanne, who finally ventured to question him. He only succeeded in irritating him. Rameau berated his friend, pronounced him an imbecile, and displayed such a temper that the alienist left him, firmly convinced that something was wrong with that powerful brain.

He consulted Munzel, who, proceeding by totally different methods, touched at the first stroke the sensitive chord, and provoked an access of tenderness, during which the great man imparted the entire secret to him. The senti-

mental and mild German sympathized with Rameau, and softened his rigorous nature. He proved to him that to reject happiness when it presents itself is to commit a crime against oneself. And, before evening, he had persuaded him to go once more and see Conchita. From seeing her to marrying her was but a single step, and that was soon made.

Then an extraordinary flowering of love took place in the heart of Rameau. He thought of naught else but his fiancé. Everything was subordinated to her. This man, who had hitherto disdained to waste his time in the joys of love, now gave himself up to the tender passion absolutely. His countenance beamed beneath his gray hair, like a rose that blooms in autumn. He had all the fancies of youth, he dressed with elegance, and astounded the scientific world by showing them a Rameau, buoyant, brilliant, smiling—one of the most unexpected phenomena of this latter quarter of the century.

But he was himself again, when it came to a question of being married in the church. When Mme. Etchevarray suggested the publication of the banns in the parish church, the materialist cast on her such a withering glance that the good woman did not dare make further reference to the matter. But Conchita returned to the charge. The Spanish girl, as superstitious as pious, looked with horror on a marriage without the benediction of the priest. And with tears in her eyes she implored Rameau to conform to the rule.

For the first time he was unyielding. He shook his huge head, and in the most delicate way tried to make the young girl understand that to submit to a religious marriage would be giving the lie to his past professions; would be a denial of all his convictions, and a humiliating recantation of his doctrines. Certainly, he would like to do anything to please her, but he could not expose himself to ridicule to satisfy the caprice of a child!

Conchita did not argue the question. She had recourse to

the eloquence of tears. But Rameau remained unshaken. She then grew cold and silent. She allowed the savant to argue for hours, without paying the least attention to his reasoning. All his passionate eloquence had no effect on her. She remained firm in her resolution. At the termination of all his pleading, her unvarying answer was:

“No church, no marriage.”

He departed without having come to any decision, and poured out on the devoted Talvanne a torrent of anger that almost bereft the good man of his senses. The alienist had the misfortune to say to him with ironic good-nature :

“After all, I do not understand you. What harm can it do you to go to church? You will perform that formality as a matter of worldly convenience. Have I not seen you a score of times both in the synagogue and the church on the occasion of the funerals of your deceased confrères? Did it entail any disgrace on you? You occupied your seat decently, as became a gentleman; you assisted at the ceremonies without taking any part in them. What was there wrong in that? The great advantage of atheism is that it allows one to tolerate without inconvenience the most diverse forms of religious belief. The moment one does not believe, he is relieved from all embarrassment.”

“Oh! it is not that I care as far as regards myself, but what would people say of me?”

“Ah, I see!” replied Talvanne. “You are afraid of the gallery; you feel that you are before the public, and you are afraid of their opinion. You dread what they may think of you. There is a good deal of posing in your affair. I have always been convinced that if you materialists were confined in a dark cell, all alone, removed from human eye, without hope of escape from death, you would fall on your knees like anybody else, and try to remember the prayers you have forgotten!”

Rameau, who had listened in anxious silence thus far, now burst forth and heaped such abuse on Talvanne that

the latter did not reappear for two days. The doctor was compelled to go to him. He entered as Talvanne was about to dine, seated himself at table without speaking, and then in the course of the evening, while passing the time in his friend's cabinet, in the midst of a collection of skulls representing all the races of mankind, he confided to Talvanne the fact that the marriage engagement was broken off unless he yielded to the will of Conchita.

"She is as headstrong, my friend, as the mules of her own country," he remarked, with a bitterness of tone. "She does not argue; she does not reason. She simply says, 'I want to be married by the priest.' And then she begins to cry. She will drive me mad."

"Well, in that case I will take care of you. Love-lunacy is curable. Bran-baths, emollient diet, and a couple of hours' promenade daily in a flower-garden. It is only an affair of a few months; and the patient is better after it than before."

Rameau did not appear to have listened. He remained silent for some minutes, and then sadly remarked:

"Talvanne, she won't yield. What is to be done?"

"Are you still attached to her?"

"More than to my life itself!"

"A man like you! And what do you expect to find in her?"

Rameau's face lit up as he replied:

"Something I do not know—happiness!"

Talvanne mused a moment and replied:

"Old fellow, resistance is useless. Since you dread the furor that your apparent apostasy would cause—for, on my word, your atheism is a religion, also, in the name of which you proscribe all others—well, arrange it by submitting to a religious marriage in Spain. Cross the frontier. Nothing remarkable in that. Your wife is a native of Navarre. And who will know what you will do, once you are at the other side of the Pyrenees?"

"You are right," exclaimed Rameau, suddenly rising. "Your expedient has saved me."

Madame Etchevarray, greatly disturbed at the turn things had taken, and desirous of securing such an unexpected catch for her daughter, meantime reasoned with Conchita. The latter accepted as a victory this semi-surrender of Rameau, and becoming once more as sweet and charming as ever, she no longer marred the joy of her fiancé. The mother, daughter, and the future son-in-law set out for Biarritz, from whence they proceeded to the native town of the Etchevarray family. Talvanne and Munzel, who acted as witnesses for their friend, rejoined them a few days later. And the week following, without any noise or difficulty, the marriage took place.

CHAPTER III.

THE LINK BROKEN.

THE return of Dr. Rameau was a triumphant one. Everywhere he went he presented his wife with undisguised pride. He was now as anxious to mingle in society as he had been before to shun it. Conchita, to whom her husband's celebrity attracted much attention, produced a great sensation, and was classed from the outset as one of the reigning beauties. She always appeared simple and retiring, wholly devoid of pretension, appearing to offer all her success as a homage to her husband. The disparity of age which existed between them had tempted certain young men to pay court to her. She received their adulations with perfect nonchalance, but never permitted herself to indulge in any coquetry. The aspirants were promptly discouraged. The virtue of Conchita was admitted to be beyond all temptation. Talvanne, who had seen his friend change his mode of life not without apprehension, now breathed more freely. He began to believe that Rameau would be happy, and to hope that he would

be so himself. For every sentiment of the doctor had its counterpart in the heart of Talvanne.

After the first month of his married life, Rameau concluded that the modest apartments of the Rue La Harpe were not in keeping with his dignity. He bought the mansion of Marshal Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Dominique and the Avenue de Constantine, and furnished it in the most luxurious manner. Mme. Etchevarray came to live with him, together with the good Rosalie, and between the two women the house was the home of comfort and happiness. Rameau held a reception for his friends on Saturdays, and the élite of Paris thronged his salons. The distinguished scientist had entered into, to him, a new existence. Each day brought added happiness.

His home life was the complement of his public life. He now had some one to share the joys of his success. Between his wife and his friends he knew what it was to be perfectly happy. He had nothing more to desire. Every evening Talvanne and Munzel dropped in at about nine o'clock, and the happy salon resounded with music and good cheer until midnight. Munzel soon found that Conchita had a sweet and musical voice. He accompanied her on the piano, while she sang the most popular of Spanish airs with a sweetness unsurpassed. After she would finish, the sentimental German would remain at the piano and interpret some beautiful reverie of Schubert. The silence that would follow would be religious in its delightful solemnity. Often Conchita would sit, with tears in her eyes, in the corner of the salon, absorbed in musical ecstasy.

Usually, she was cold and formal toward Munzel. She did not make the least freedom with him, while she laughed and joked with Talvanne with all the innocent delight of a school-girl. She always addressed Munzel as "Mister." With the alienist she always used "Talvanne," like her husband. Rameau was not slow to mark this distinction, and referred to it when talking to Conchita. The young

woman replied that the cold and serious nature of the artist did not respond to her own like that of the physician ; that, in a word, she entertained the greatest esteem and friendship for Munzel, but did not feel toward him the unreserved open-heartedness she did for Talvanne. Sentimentality of this nature is not generated ; you either feel it, or you do not. That's all.

Talvanne, who had always retained, unconsciously perhaps, a leaven of jealousy in his heart, took a secret joy in being thus favored by Conchita. The doctor, however, who defended Munzel's coldness and formality with Conchita, ended by having to defend himself for the same reason.

Seeing herself an undisputed sovereign, with her husband at her feet, only having to suggest her wishes to see them realized, the young wife grew so emboldened as to dream of modifying the ideas that had caused her first tiffs with her husband. She intended to attack the stronghold of his materialism, to overthrow that bastille of his iniquity, and to turn to the glory of heaven that profound adoration which her husband entertained toward herself.

She confided her intention to her mother. But the old lady was not disposed to encourage her. Full of gratitude to Rameau, whose disinterestedness and goodness she admired, Mme. Etchevarray silenced her religious scruples when it was a question of apologizing for her son-in-law. She had a special indulgence for him, and her narrowness of mind was corrected by her broadness of heart. Then Conchita, with the pettishness of a spoiled child, indulged in bitter comments on the indignity of preventing her from trying to save him who shared her life and her love.

"To remain impassive and indifferent," she used to exclaim, "would be to share in the complicity. I would thus become as guilty as himself. For he is guilty, mother ; you know he is, or rather you shut your eyes to the fact."

"My child, your husband is perfection itself, and if he be not worthy of canonization there are no saints. Don't

you see that different men can be agreeable to God in their different ways : one way is to faithfully observe His commandments and do as He ordains ; the other to devote oneself passionately to the welfare of His creatures, and to practice good works instead of talking of creeds. To be sure, it is all the better to be virtuous and to practice good works at the same time, but we must not be too exacting, and when we meet a man who is virtuous only, it is the part of wisdom to be satisfied."

"But, mother, he doesn't believe in anything."

"Well, you believe enough for both, so God can strike the balance."

But this pleasantry, with which Mme. Etchevarray accepted the moral condition of Rameau, did not commend itself to Conchita. She remained silent, sad, downcast, haunted by the idea that the unbelief of her husband would surely bring down some misfortune on them. Like those lofty hills that attract the lightning, this pinnacle of human pride, that braved the Creator, would be rent by the thunderbolts of God. And so, she persistently sought to win from Rameau a first concession, which would be the visible sign of his ultimate surrender. She devoted herself passionately to this object with all the zeal of a missionary. She worked, she prayed, she felt herself ready to make any sacrifice to succeed.

One of the means she adopted was coquetry. She sought to stimulate the love of her husband—to make his one desire in life the possession of her heart. She was, by turns, capricious, sad, unreasonable, and suddenly joyous. Her fanciful and charming character was full of irresistible attractions for Rameau. He adored this lovely girl, whose caprices lent to the leisure hours of his laborious life an unforeseen and continual delight. He submitted to the tyranny of this woman he so loved, not only with complacency but with rapture. He yielded to her every wish, even the most unreasonable, and showed that he was willing to make any sacrifice to win from her a smile of love.

It was spring-time, and the month of May came on in all its flowery beauty. The nights were soft and pleasant, the skies were blue and serene, and the budding verdure was grateful to the senses. One evening, after the doctor and Conchita had dined alone, she asked him to go out for a walk. They started, arm in arm, like a pair of lovers, walking slowly along the unfrequented esplanade of the Invalides. They came to the quay, crossed the bridge De la Concorde, and soon found themselves in the Parisian throng that were moving toward the Champs-Élysées. In the groves, lit up with their opalescent lamps, the bands were playing merrily. In the distance, near the Palais de l'Industrie, music blared from a café concert. The carriages rolled rapidly by along the avenue, bearing the anxious crowd to the refreshing odors of the Bois. For a moment Conchita and Rameau remained motionless, gazing at this tide of human life, their ears filled with the tumult of the joyous throng. Then they slowly continued their promenade toward the heart of the city, attracted by the glowing lights in the distance.

They crossed the Rue Royale, she leaning on the arm of her husband, caressing, as if given up to love alone; he rejoicing in the pleasure of the possession of this adorable woman in all the bloom of her youth and beauty. They reached the Place de la Madeleine, dark in the midst of the light of the boulevards, with its lofty, sombre church, lifting its massive Grecian architecture into the darkness overhead. They proceeded as far as the iron railing, and there, through the open door, they saw the altar beaming with lights and decorated with flowers.

"It is the month of Mary," murmured Conchita.

And, stopping before the steps, her eyes fixed on the beauty of the sacred scene, she stood wrapped in contemplation, as if attracted by an irresistible force.

"How beautiful!" she sighed.

And her arm pressed her husband's more caressingly; while he, suspecting no design, waited for her to continue

their walk. Conchita, with slower step, continued on her way, but, instead of following the boulevard, she turned along the railing, in the sombre solitude of the spot, seized with a sudden desire which she could not express, but which she overpoweringly felt. On reaching one of the side doors, she led her husband past the railing, and, after a few steps, they found themselves at the entrance.

"Where are we going?" asked Rameau, somewhat surprised, softly resisting his wife's movement.

"Let us go in," she whispered, in her winning voice. "Will you?"

And, as she spoke, she adroitly turned on him the full battery of her melting glance.

"See," she resumed, pressing his arm more closely, "the church is dark and empty. Who will know it?"

He was taken aback somewhat, but, after a pause, smilingly answered:

"I, my dear."

"Well, can't you be a little indulgent toward yourself?"

"We must be indulgent toward others and severe toward ourselves."

"Oh! don't begin to preach your philosophy to me now; be simple. That is when I love you most; and, then, I do love you so dearly! Do you think you will be lost for entering a church with your wife? It is the month of Mary, and throngs come here for no other purpose than to listen to the music and admire the pomp of the worship."

"It is this pomp I disapprove of, and that is what repels me."

"Then sacrifice your repugnance, just for once, to please me."

"Conchita, go alone, I beg of you; I will wait for you here, with pleasure, no matter how long you stay."

She looked up at him, and her eyes flashed as she said: "It is never good to say to a young woman, 'Go alone!'"

His old frown darkened his face for an instant, and he answered softly:

“Conchita, do not trifle with my love.”

“Isn't it you who are trifling with mine?”

She changed her tone, and her momentary harshness was turned into caressing sweetness. She again hung on the arm of her husband, and for a time, in the sombre shade of the church, beneath the calm, serene sky, they stood clinging to one another—he feeling the young heart of her whom he adored beating against his own, she bent on a supreme effort to overcome his proud resistance. She stood on her tiptoes and whispered into his ear in her softest tone :

“Remember, you once entered a church with me, and in full daylight at that, and that you bent your knee and bowed your head. Did any harm come to you by it? You won your wife that day, poor though she was, and you now know how devoted she is to you. Will you not now grant her this one favor—and it is such a small one?”

Rameau gazed into the eyes of Conchita, that sparkled like the stars overhead. A ray of love passed over his face, and bending down, as if to drink in her charms, answered :

“I will ! Let us go in.”

Forgetful of the spot she put her arms around his neck and kissed him with ecstatic rapture. And then, with a bitterness of feeling,—for a proud and puissant mind like his could not repudiate its principles without a struggle,—he said to himself, “I am now paying for the first step I took in the path of apostasy. And if I do not resist, to what length will she not lead me?”

Led on by Conchita, he entered one of the aisles that was almost empty, the mass of the worshippers filling the nave. The perfume of the flowers sweetened the atmosphere, and a solemn silence prevailed. The services had just begun. Conchita, silent and collected, leading her husband, proceeded until she came to the Virgin's altar, resplendent with lights and laden with flowers. Instinctively the atheist resisted the pressure that urged him for-

ward in the full glow of the lights, and he stopped short in a dark side-aisle. Smiling, her pretty face lit up with triumph, Conchita knelt down, and, after a short prayer, rose and remained standing beside her husband.

After a harmonious prelude on the organ, sweet young voices rose, fresh and clear, like the voice of angels ; then stronger voices joined in, to which were added the softer voices of women, all commingling like a universal choir celebrating the glory of the Most High. Conchita, burning with the desire of converting her husband, felt her heart soften and melt as if flooded with Divine grace. She felt an almost heavenly joy. Enraptured with her own faith, intoxicated by the delicious perfume of the dying flowers, exalted by the music and singing, she was passionately intent on bending her husband's will in unreasoning submission. She believed him prepared for the reception of the gift of faith by the external seductions of a worship charming to the senses ; and pointing to a marble statue of the Virgin holding the infant Saviour in her arms, smiling and beautiful, she said :

"I am going to pray that we may be given a babe as sweet and beautiful as that which she holds in her arms. Join in my prayer, simply by bending your knee, and I am sure my prayer will be heard."

Rameau smiled on detecting the snare ; a child, a living proof of his love for the woman who was his sole joy, would, indeed, be the sum of all his happiness, and she took advantage of this, his dearest desire, to lead him to an act of moral weakness which in his eyes would be dishonorable. He looked at his wife, not in anger, indeed, but with profound melancholy. Even when she caused him pain or annoyance, he found an excuse for her. Conchita, seeing him remain silent and indifferent, bent over in a last determined effort:

"It is such a little thing. I only ask you to bow your head, to join with me so that our common hope may mingle in one desire and ascend in one sole thought to heaven.

Do it, I beg of you, and I will love you all the more, if such is possible, and do anything for your sake."

He shook his head and answered :

"I cannot do what you ask of me, Conchita ; I am an unbeliever. If the Divinity to whom you wish me to submit exists, he cannot receive favorably an act of faith that is not dictated by conscience ; if he does not exist, to what a ridiculous and vain comedy you would subject me !"

He was about to continue, but his wife, horrified at such blasphemy in the very house of God, placed her little white hand over his lips. She withdrew it hastily ; it seemed to her as if a Satanic fire had passed into her veins from such contact with impiety. But now, having broken down the bank that restrained the flood of his protest, he could no longer repress it. He took his wife's arm, and, leading her apart to a dark and secluded spot of the great building, bade her sit down ; and there, while the organ pealed and the voices resounded, he in turn undertook to enlighten, as he thought, that darkened but pious mind that he felt was on the verge of turning away from him.

"Conchita, do not condemn me, I implore you, without having heard me, at least. I feel that at this moment I cause you apprehension, but I wish at the same time to assure you, to convince you, that I am neither wicked nor unjust. If a word sufficed to satisfy you, I would utter it unhesitatingly. You know that I yielded to you on one occasion ; you see that this evening again I consented to follow you, so then judge me by my past complaisance and not by my present refusal. What good would a meaningless consent on my part be for you ? Is that what you desire ? Oh, I beg of you not to turn away from me ! Do not place that God, who you say is all goodness and love, between your heart and mine. You love Him passionately, but I love you more passionately still. You pray to Him, but I adore you, and my very existence is bound up in your grace and beauty. You are the only deity I can

worship. Can you reproach me when I prostrate myself before you as at the feet of a charming divinity? Can you regard it as a crime?"

"Your language is perverting," murmured Conchita in a low voice. "You substitute a creature for the Creator. Your thoughts and words are pagan. You not only do not wish to reform yourself, but you try to ruin me."

"I?" said Rameau, evidently hurt in his feelings—"I to try to break down your faith! Oh, no! I have all my life fought for liberty of conscience. Do you think I could abandon my conviction to hurt the feelings of my own wife that I love as I love my heart? If you wish to pray, my dear Conchita, pray for your mother and me. I would give anything to have the faith you have. But faith is a gift of God, as you say. Happy those who have it! May God vouchsafe it to me!"

Then the wife, with tearful eyes, begged: "Try and believe; lift your thoughts to God and you will be heard."

"Heaven is empty, Conchita. Every people has its own gods, but their fragile idols are but the divination of human passions. Peoples have passed away, different forms of worship have succeeded one another, the gods have changed—but heaven is still empty!"

The great scientist arose, shrugged his huge shoulders, shook his lion-like head, as if banishing importunate thoughts, and said:

"Darling, let us not talk on that subject any further. It only causes me pain, and, what I feel more, it hurts you. You cannot convert me, and certainly I shall never try to influence you, for I would regard it as a crime to deprive you of the faith that sustains and comforts you. Forgive me for talking to you with such frankness, but believe me it is because I love you with all my soul."

"With all your soul?" replied Conchita, with a tinge of sarcasm. "Have you really got a soul?"

"You are right, my dear," answered Rameau, with a smile. "See how superstition even corrupts language. I

don't know that I have got a soul, but I do know I have a heart, and that heart is entirely yours."

He seized his wife's hand, and, lovingly pressing it, said :
"At all events, if a mortal creature ever possessed a soul, that creature is you, Conchita, for you are to me altogether above humanity."

She made no answer. They both walked out slowly, leaving behind them the pompous ceremonies which were so impressive for Conchita. The voices of the choir grew faint in the distance, the lights grew less, the perfume of the fading flowers vanished, and the rushing world again broke on the sight. They descended the steps, passed the railing, and, in the softness of that spring-time evening, Rameau sought to impress his own ideas on his wife. But Conchita was cold and indifferent. His hope of capturing her affections had failed. She did not seem to care any longer about the subject on which she had before set her heart. She succumbed, woman-like, feeling her defeat, but did not suspect that at the moment there entered into her heart an unconscious hatred against him who had deprived her of the joy of her dreamed-of triumph.

From this day forward a great change took place in the mind of Conchita. The gratitude she entertained for Rameau disappeared ; the tender admiration that she felt for her illustrious husband grew weak ; and finally love was smothered in the horror inspired by incorrigible atheism. He seemed to her a different man. His magnificent but unconventional—rude, if you may—traits took on the semblance of Satanic pride. With his forehead furrowed by thought and study, Rameau appeared to her harsh as the destroying angel. She discovered, in the darkness of his heavy eyebrows that marked his splendid face, the awful signs of an infernal perversity. She noted the cynicism of his language, and his apparent contempt of humanity.

Rameau, whom she had hitherto not only loved as a husband, but revered as a father, was to her suddenly trans-

formed into a menacing and redoubtable being. She could not look at him without feeling weary, and felt in his presence that patient restlessness so peculiar to women. She did not try to bend him or influence him any more. Everything he said and did she regarded as right—as the will of a being superior to herself—as something to be listened to and obeyed. She no longer indulged in the little coquettish arts of love. Her husband acted with the most perfect tact, and the nobleness of his genius lent grandeur to all his actions.

She made it a point never to mention the word “religion” in presence of her husband. She considered it a profanation, a sin against heaven. Still, she had such a leaven of bitterness in her heart that she could not restrain herself from talking one evening to Talvanne and Munzel of the incredulity of their friend. It was in summer-time, in the afternoon; they were all in the salon, instead of being in the garden, as usual. A delicious freshness came in through the windows—all the joys of spring were in the air. In the darkness Madame Etchevarray, Munzel, Talvanne, and Conchita were seated together. The two men smoked in silence, and Rameau passed into his study to write a letter.

In a moment Conchita brusquely said, as if she had been thinking of it for a time :

“You, Talvanne, and Mr. Munzel—you are both believers?”

“Oh, yes!” the alienist replied. “I have been brought up by my mother, and you know the great influence of woman in the matter of religion.”

“Ah!” interrupted Conchita, in a tone of raillery that caused the two men to look at one another with surprise. And she added pettishly, “Don’t ever pay any attention to women in the matter of religion.”

Talvanne, who was keen as he was kind, suspected the possibility of a dangerous argument, and wished to avoid it. And he added:

"As to Munzel, he is a German, and therefore somewhat mystic; the son of a choir-master, consequently impregnated with sacred music; blonde, with blue eyes, hence given to reverie. If he was not a believer, under present conditions, then he would not be human. And, besides, his life was passed in painting sacred pictures for churches."

"Do you go to church on Sunday?" asked Mme. Etchevarray.

"I? Never," answered Talvanne.

"You are, then, no more religious than the doctor himself."

"The doctor, dear madame, has a religion of his own—the religion of Nature. And he is more devoted to that religion than I am to mine. He communes daily with Nature, and his prayer is: 'Nature, give me the power of penetrating your secrets, so that I may help my fellow-man, and lessen his sufferings.'"

"My son-in-law is a good man—I know it," replied madame. "And, remember, it is not the most deserving that are rewarded."

"You are right, madame," replied Munzel, in a soft voice; "and it is certain that Talvanne and I put together do not equal the doctor. We must take into account the trend of certain minds, and not ask of those who penetrate the spheres, to crawl on the ground, and bend themselves to the rule of universal ignorance. All great innovators have been misunderstood. Galileo was imprisoned. So was Columbus, because the discovery of a new world was deemed a heresy. All the great philosophers, all the illustrious savants have been persecuted, because they were ahead of their times. Our friend is so far ahead of those around him that we ought to abstain, respectfully, from criticising him. We may follow him, apprehensive, no doubt, but who of us can say that he is wrong? If he is deceived, who of us can be sure?"

"I am sure," replied Conchita, in a trembling voice. "The first duty of man is to obey his Creator, his Master,

his God ! If he rebels against the Supreme law, woe to him, and to those around him ! ”

This passionate outburst drew forth no response. Talvanne turned aside, and pretended to hear nothing.

“ Well,” broke in Mme. Etchevarray, after a few seconds, “ you lose your balance, you grow excited, and all for what ? ”

“ I am the guilty one,” replied Munzel. “ I have unintentionally led the conversation into a controversial channel. I must now try to re-establish harmony.”

He sat down before the harmonium, which was a sort of pendant to the piano, and played a sweet but dreamy air. The pure melody he evoked broke into the silence with a delicious charm.

“ What is that ? ” asked Talvanne.

It was a motet from Porpora, Handel’s great rival.

He continued to play, but more softly, letting the sound fall till it became a mere accompaniment to his words.

“ I was twenty years of age,” he remarked, “ when I heard that air for the first time. It was in the Cathedral of Cologne. One Sunday I entered the great edifice about noon, and I was struck by the light that streamed in through the colored windows. The altar-bell rang for the Elevation, every head was bowed, and the silence was solemnly profound. The melody of that exquisite air burst forth, and I was enraptured. I have never forgotten it since, and I always play it with renewed pleasure.”

“ It’s very nice,” Conchita broke in, in a changed tone.

At the same moment Dr. Rameau entered the salon, followed by the servant holding a light, and Talvanne saw that the young wife was in tears. The conversation for the rest of the night passed off without incident.

Talvanne, however, retained an unfavorable recollection of Conchita’s temper, which he regarded as the beginning of defiance. He was a keen observer by nature and by profession. He now took it upon himself to study the young wife’s character, and an infinity of petty details that

theretofore had passed unnoticed, now struck him as most strange. Conchita, who had hitherto been so active, now did not stir a hand, and did not even read to occupy her time. She remained passive, like a beautiful odalisque. When one entered the parlor, she had to be spoken to before she appeared to notice one's presence. What was her absorbing thought?

She often went out, during the day, alone, at almost regular hours, and, when asked where she had been, she answered, with the quiet assurance of a woman whose conduct is above suspicion:

"I was out for a walk."

Talvanne, who took an added interest in her since she had grown so sad and moody, followed her. She led him a long walk through Paris—to the Church of the Madeleine. She went up the steps and entered. Talvanne, surprised, called a cab and drove to his hospital in the Rue Vincennes. He followed her for several days, and each time she led him the same walk—to the Church of the Madeleine.

Talvanne, surprised at the regularity of this pilgrimage, and too much of a Parisian not to suspect some mystery under this exact devotion, followed Conchita, one day, into the church. She walked up along the aisle, turned to one side, and was lost to view. He followed, and saw her kneeling in the chapel of the Virgin, before the statue of the infant Saviour. Prostrated, in the intensity of her piety, she remained for a time motionless. After a quarter of an hour she rose, and returned home.

The alienist now breathed freely; he had suspected an adventure, and was agreeably undeceived. Still he redoubled his surveillance, but always only to find that the church was the only object of the young woman's devotion. It was interesting to know where Conchita went every day, but it was still more interesting to know why she went.

One evening Talvanne, who was burning with curiosity, asked with an indifferent air:

"I passed you twice this week, as you came out from the Church of the Madeleine. It is rather a long distance to go to church, is it not?"

She was a little startled at the suddenness of the question, and the doctor, who was seated at the other end of the room reading a pamphlet, raised his eyes and cast a disquiet glance on his friend. Meantime Conchita, with flashing eyes and blushing face, answered abruptly :

"That is the church I want to pray in. It is there I like to go, in the hope of warding off evil from us."

"Warding off evil?" began Talvanne. But he had not time to finish. The doctor rose, flung the pamphlet on the table, and brusquely said :

"Leave Conchita alone. She does what she likes, and it is nobody's business but her own."

"Oh ! that's certain," responded the poor alienist, somewhat staggered. "But I meant no offence by my remark."

"Well, let us talk of something else."

And the subject was changed. But Conchita remained sullen and absorbed, casting from time to time an uneasy glance at her husband.

What had come between them? Talvanne hoped to find out, but could not.

Another besides himself had remarked the mental struggle of the young wife. It was Munzel. The German, after having tranquilly received Conchita's coldness of manner, now seemed to set about dissipating her prejudices. He shook off his phlegmatic indolence and spent money with unusual extravagance. Rameau frequently chaffed him on the subject, saying :

"I say, Talvanne, I have a suspicion that Frantz is courting my wife. You know I have no time to watch them, so I charge you with the business."

Talvanne answered with more seriousness than the occasion demanded :

"You can rely on me."

There was no further reference made to the matter.

But the alienist took his mission seriously, and he not only began to keep a watch over the young wife, but also to study the painter. His former dislike toward him returned at the idea of Conchita favoring Munzel. Certainly Talvanne's intentions were pure and honorable, but he could not bear that another should be preferred to himself. He entertained more jealousy than the husband himself. He considered himself entitled to a monopoly of her friendship as well as to that of her husband.

But he was soon reassured. Conchita paid not the slightest attention to Munzel. Her mother, who had been ill for some time, engaged all her care. Broken down by the ills of life, she was unable to leave her room. Her son-in-law tended her with the greatest affection and assiduity. But, as Rameau remarked, the machine would no longer work, unless certain wheels were changed—the heart for one. Despite the confidence that Conchita had in her husband's infallible skill, she disliked seeing him attending to her mother, or coming in any contact with her. On the contrary, she often led Talvanne to the sick-room and asked his advice. He invariably refused, saying :

“You know I am not a physician ; I am simply a maniac taking care of other maniacs ; that's all.”

“But your presence alone,” urged Conchita, “does mother good” ; and she added, after a pause, “You are a Christian, a believer, and that alone neutralizes evil influences.”

Talvanne now began to understand, and the matter seemed to him serious. Evidently an estrangement had taken place between Conchita and Rameau, the beginning of which was the doctor's unbelief. The young wife had, perhaps, been again endeavoring to convert him. Her Spanish fanaticism, coming in contact with the harsh infidelity of her husband, might lead to regrettable consequences. It was plain that Conchita held the doctor responsible for her mother's illness. She regarded it as a chastisement of God, as a mark of His wrath for her living

with an atheist, a punishment for her laxity in leading him into the path of virtue.

Talvanne imagined the scenes that had transpired between the young wife and her husband. He had too much respect for the intellectual calm of his friend to speak to him concerning his moral condition. He saw no advantage in interfering in the matter at all. The task of endeavoring to reconcile religion and infidelity is subject to difficulty. If he would defend his friend, he ran the risk of displeasing Conchita. And his pleasant position in that household, of which he himself was virtually a member, might be compromised. Selfishness alone dictated abstention. And nevertheless a little more broadness of view would have shown him that, at that trying hour, he could have brought encouragement and relief to Conchita by pursuing a bolder course. And how much misfortune and suffering would have been spared to those whom he sincerely loved.

One morning, on arriving at Rameau's house, he observed that the faces of the servants wore a sad and sombre expression. He entered the doctor's room, and found him writing at his desk.

"What is the matter?" he asked; "everybody around seems to have lost their heads."

Rameau gravely answered:

"Madame Etchevarray died this morning."

After a moment's silence, Talvanne replied:

"You have suffered a grievous loss. Madame esteemed you greatly. She was a good woman. But how came she to go so suddenly? She seemed to be comparatively well yesterday."

"Yes, the lamp always flickers brightly before going out. She had a bad turn during the night; I was called, but could do nothing. You know we are not masters of life."

"And your wife?" questioned Talvanne anxiously.

"She is quite prostrated. You will do me a favor by going to see her; you may, perhaps, afford her some relief."

Talvanne hastened to her apartment, and entered without knocking. The blinds were drawn, and the room was almost dark. Conchita rose as he entered and said :

“You see the blow has come at last.”

“Come,” she continued ; “you loved her in life, and she loved you. See, how happy she looks—as if she were only sleeping.”

The body lay surrounded by flowers, a crucifix on the bosom, while a Sister of Charity sat at the foot of the bed, reading her prayer-book.

Conchita knelt kown, kissed the hand of her mother, then rose and said :

“I have had the last sacraments administered to her. She recovered consciousness shortly before death, and died in a state of grace. She is now at rest with God ; she protects, defends me, and with the assistance of her prayers I am sure we will all be happy forever.”

Talvanne listened, but made no reply. He remembered that he had once seen his own mother stretched on the bed of death. A flood of painful recollections came back on him ; he bent down and made the sign of the cross. In presence of this simple act of piety, performed by this grave and serious man, Conchita felt her heart expand. And then taking Talvanne by the hand, and looking as if another trouble besides the death of her mother oppressed her, she exclaimed, in a tone of despair :

“Ah ! if he would only pray with me and believe with me, how I could love him !”

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATAL PORTRAIT.

TALVANNE was unquestionably an eminent alienist, for he saved Conchita from losing her mind. He talked in a way to produce mental calm, and he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was the only one who could bring about this desired result. Rameau shook his hand with an effusive warmth that he had not exhibited in twenty years. Conchita, whose countenance was as sombre as the mourning garb she wore, had wrapped herself up in her melancholy solitude, and seemed determined to wholly seclude herself from the world. Munzel, received with stiff formality, in daytime, and entirely deprived of his joyous evenings, manifested a singular uneasiness. He grew whimsical and restless, he who had been theretofore so calm and unemotional. He surprised Talvanne by his inexplicable outbursts of temper. He railed against life and cursed his destiny.

And surely he had no right to do so, for if painter ever was favorably treated by fortune, it was he. Drawn into the brilliant orbit of the great scientist, he had no trouble in gaining acquaintance with the most renowned artists and influential personages. Although quite young, he had already received orders that had brought him in a lucrative remuneration. His reputation spread rapidly, and in his thirty-eighth year he found himself at the height of fame and success. It was now so different from the time when his aged father was on the threshold of the prison for the matter of a fine of a few thousand florins. One of Frantz's pictures now brought him thirty thousand francs at least, while it required special influence to have a portrait painted by him. He had grown so exclusive as to paint only such faces as pleased him.

He had often begged of Conchita to sit for her portrait. She steadfastly refused. She had always an excellent pre-

text ; her duties did not give her the time, or she dreaded the tediousness or number of the sittings. Finally, her mother was taken ill. Munzel took advantage of Conchita's period of mourning, of her trouble, of the dull *ennui* of her existence to press his request.

"You have nothing to occupy your time now ; it will only help to kill time," he said. "You are troubled, and I shall respect your trouble. You will not speak, and I shall remain silent. In short, I subscribe in advance to all your conditions ; I yield to all your demands."

Conchita, with a sort of impetuous obstinacy, replied : "No !" She no longer gave any reason or pretext ; she refused absolutely, and when her husband mildly reproached her for her lack of amiability, and for not availing herself of the painter's proffer, she lost her temper and surprised him by the asperity of her refusal. On one occasion she was so snappish toward Munzel that he abruptly rose and declared that as his presence caused such annoyance, and led to such irritating remarks, he would return to the house no more. And, despite Rameau's apologies, despite his kindly remonstrances, he kept his word. And, to make assurance doubly sure, he left Paris and went home to his family.

He remained away for four months. His name was no longer mentioned, and Talvanne was supremely happy, when one morning, after breakfast, there arrived by the express a large box from Germany, addressed to Madame Rameau. The box did not attract any special attention, but when opened revealed a beautifully executed portrait of Mme. Etchevarray. The lady was represented in her large chair, as was her habit, near the table, knitting with her roll of yarn in her lap. The face was of such a perfect resemblance that Conchita and Rameau looked at it in mute surprise. They remained for a few moments motionless before this resurrection of the departed one, charmed by the art displayed in this masterpiece. Conchita had the picture hung up in her room, and it seemed

to her that she whose presence she missed from morning till night in the now lonesome mansion was again restored to life.

A few days afterward, Frantz returned to Paris, and his first visit was to his friends of the Rue Saint-Dominique.

How could Conchita show her gratitude to the painter, if not by granting him the request she had hitherto so persistently refused? Did not the portrait of the mother entitle him to the right of painting that of the daughter? She herself asked to sit, and the melancholy countenance of Munzel lit up with a ray of delight. Arrangements were at once made, and, for the first time, Conchita crossed the threshold of Munzel's studio. Rameau, delighted on seeing harmony re-established, accompanied his wife himself, selected the pose, and accessories, and observed with pleasure the first sketch on the canvas. Then, engaged by his occupations, he ceased to attend the sittings.

Munzel and Conchita were thus brought together for many long hours at a time. It was near the close of winter, and the evenings were growing long. The doctor often, in coming for Conchita, found her and the painter awaiting him. Through the open window a last ray of light streamed in, throwing a sparkling scintillation on a shield on the wall. The dying flowers in their crystal vases spread a languid odor around. Conchita, reclining on a sofa, in the gathering darkness, was listening to Munzel as he played on the piano a waltz from Strauss or a nocturne from Chopin. The young wife and the painter would then return with Rameau to the Rue Saint-Dominique. Most of the time Talvanne would drop in also, and the evenings were passed in happy enjoyment.

Since the arrival of Munzel, however, the alienist was chagrined, and took no pains to conceal it. Rameau, who was accustomed to these peculiarities of character, did not regard them seriously, and even took advantage of them to fling at his friend some of his keenest epigrams. But Talvanne, usually so prompt at repartée, let all the doc-

tor's shafts fall without once returning them, and continued cold and sullen. He made it a point especially never to speak of the portrait. From the very first he was unfavorably impressed by the nature of the circumstances that brought Conchita and Munzel together. His suspicious mind had already divined evil consequences from that familiarity which was necessarily to spring up between the painter and his subject. He did not speak of it at first, but he could not always remain silent, and one day, while alone with Rameau, he said to him abruptly:

"You have not attended the sittings for some days past?"

"No; I have no time."

"Then, who accompanies your wife?"

"Nobody. She is big enough to go alone."

Talvanne frowned, and significantly replied:

"Big enough—yes. But old enough—no!"

"To go to Munzel's studio?"

"To shut herself up with any man for three hours every day!"

"You are foolish."

"No, I am not foolish; it is others who are so. And I assure you that nobody would think it becoming for a woman as young and as beautiful as your wife, to remain *tête-à-tête* for a whole month with a painter."

"Who is my intimate friend!"

"But people will talk."

"Who are the 'people'?—you yourself, who are as gabby as a woman. Besides, I pay no attention to gossip. Ah! you are still the same with your artful hostility. It is just like you to point to the susceptibility of other people in order to play an unfriendly trick on Munzel."

"I?"

"Yes, you. You have heard me say that the portrait was advancing beautifully, and that torments you. You would like it to turn out a failure, since it is not yourself that is painting it. You are selfish, envious. You have a vile nature at bottom."

At these words such a look of astonishment came over the face of Talvanne that Rameau could not restrain himself from laughing outright.

"I know well what you say to me is inspired by friendship, but there are some people whose friendship renders them disagreeable. Just think for a moment of the significance of your language. Do you think I cannot trust my wife with you for a fortnight or so without suspicion?"

"Ah, yes, indeed, at my age, and with my homely old face!"

"But your age and mine are the same."

"Yes, but you are so fine-looking, while I am so insignificant."

"You flatter me," answered the doctor, smiling. Then, in a more serious tone, he continued: "However, perhaps you are right; it is foolish to brave public opinion when there is no need for it. From to-morrow forth I will have Rosalie accompany Conchita."

Talvanne made no reply, but he evidently looked relieved. In the evening, when he came to the Rue Saint-Dominique, he was received by Madame Rameau with an unusual coolness. As he seemed surprised, she said to him with an ironic smile:

"I have reason to be pleased with you, indeed; you treat me so kindly in talking to my husband about me."

"I do not understand what you mean."

"Well, it is to you I am indebted, it seems, for not being permitted to go out any longer without a duenna."

"Ah, that's it!" replied Talvanne, smiling.

"Yes, that is it. You are suspicious; you would have made a poor husband."

"And therefore I did not marry."

"And you believe in the efficacy of surveillance for the safety of wives?"

"Not at all. It is only for the sake of appearances I approve of it."

"As far as I am concerned, you would have a weak guarantee in the person of Rosalie, who would go through fire and water for me, and would betray the whole world to serve me."

"As for you, there is no other guarantee needed than yourself."

"Ah, it is pleasant to hear you talk like that! But, believe me, confidence is the best method in dealing with women."

They were interrupted by the approach of Rameau, but Talvanne carried away a painful impression from that conversation. He had found Conchita nervous, peevish, discontented. A crisis was evidently at hand. The void caused in her existence by the death of her mother had not been filled up. She was now left alone, and between herself and her husband serious differences had sprung up. Slight as was his experience of women, the good Talvanne could not help reflecting seriously on the turn events had taken, and, devoted friend that he was, he feared that there were grave dangers at hand for the peace of him for whom he would have gladly sacrificed his own happiness.

He saw with satisfaction, for the first time in his life, Munzel come regularly to the house every evening. Judging others by himself, he said: "So long as he can meet Rameau boldly, he can have nothing to reproach himself with. But if he could have read the hearts of the painter and Conchita, his confidence would have been sadly undermined."

Since the young woman had begun to sit for her portrait Munzel was no longer the same. His melancholy had given way to a lively gaiety. He became joyous, unreserved, enthusiastic; and Conchita saw with surprise revealed to her a Frantz wholly different from his former self. Seated in the glow of the large chandelier, she would listen for hours to the painter talking to her of his boyhood, his family, his sisters, and his aged father, the

Kapelmeister of Stuttgart, who now was engaged in composing a Mass for the King's birthday. Again he would talk of his travels in Holland, Spain, and Italy ; of entire days passed in the contemplation of the masterpieces of art in the Amsterdam Museum and the Pitti Palace ; the delightful nightly promenades by gondola in the canals of Venice, in the tepid air, beneath the starry skies, to the sound of sweet music, and his long visits and rapt admiration among the splendors of St. Mark's.

With what eager attention she listened to the painter, as he described to her in his soft and pleasing voice, his face illumined as if by a mystic flame, the artistic sensations he experienced among the masterpieces of sacred pomp. She felt herself as if enveloped in the shade of the lofty marble pillars, bathed in the freshness that fell from the arches adorned with the sacred frescoes, penetrated with a sublime poesy which emanated from these artistic marvels, above which eternally reigned the idea of the Creator. She felt an exquisite delight to know that no scoffing word would pass the lips of Munzel as he discoursed on these pleasant topics. Her soul went out in unison with his. He thought as she did, believed, adored, prayed like herself. His sincerity, a little declamatory and naïve at times, charmed her. She contrasted this pleasing ingenuousness with the harsh philosophy of Rameau. And the scientific precision of the one seemed repulsive to her when compared with the cloudy idealism of the other.

Munzel opened his mind and heart to Conchita without reserve, as he had previously done with Rameau. He did not question himself concerning the nature of the sentiments that allured him on. If he could have acknowledged to himself that he loved his friend's wife, and that he was unconsciously forcing himself to compass her ruin, he would have revolted with horror at the idea. He went blindly on in the downward course he had entered upon, intoxicated with sentimentalism, and not perceiving that his every word found an echo in the heart of Conchita. He had been for

a long time galled at the preference she manifested for Talvanne. He had successfully sought to win her regard, and now that he had succeeded he meant to make the most of it. If any one had abruptly said to him, "You are paying a lover's attention to Rameau's wife," he would have stopped short, and after a self-examination would analyze the state of his mind. But there was no one to give him timely warning of the danger he was incurring. Talvanne kept away systematically, Rameau had the most unshaken confidence, and Conchita herself did not give him a hint of his danger by abandoning her habitual reserve.

There was no change in her attitude toward him, and no indication that her sentiment had undergone a transformation. She listened much and said little. Her grave countenance and calm eyes did not reflect the emotion of her mind. Even when she was most charmed by Munzel's conversation, she only manifested a sympathetic interest. But for the painter, accustomed to indifference, even this was a triumph. But how little did he suspect the influence he had exercised on the mind of Conchita.

They passed whole days with one another, talking of all things foreign to the subject that occupied them the most, both filled with a mysterious trouble that they did not seek to analyze. It seemed as if they studied to linger in that state of almost systematic ignorance, and that understanding one another without speaking, they took a supreme pleasure in deferring the moment when they would find themselves face to face with the reality. Still it was impossible that some circumstance should not occur calculated to enlighten them. But, perhaps, it came too late.

In the midst of these moral complications the work proceeded, and the portrait was almost finished. But curiously enough, in proportion as the work gained in perfection—and it was a remarkable picture—the painter grew more melancholy and taciturn, as if the completion of his task was to entail some disaster on him. Conchita had observed the change, and though she suffered from it, inasmuch as

the joyous effusiveness and charming affability of Munzel was succeeded by a melancholy silence and bitterness of feeling, she did not complain of it, and seemed to be perfectly contented. She affected a tranquillity and gaiety that only served to irritate the painter. On such occasions she would laugh and tease him, and try to make him lose his patience. But he would remain silent, and the sitting would end in gloomy dejection. At times, however, Frantz, excessively excited, talked as if he wished to reveal all his innermost thoughts; and Conchita listened to him, captivated by the recital, by his attitude, his voice, his whole bearing.

There were but a few sittings more until the portrait would be finished. One day, on reaching the studio, Conchita found Munzel more melancholy than usual. She, herself, was suffering from lassitude and uneasiness. She had made a few efforts to dissipate the sullen feelings of the painter, but in vain. Her words came with difficulty and embarrassment. A sort of torpor seemed to weigh on her mind, and she had to make an effort in order to appear contented. Frantz, seated before his easel, spoke only at intervals, and worked on with an absorbed air. The young woman, after a painful silence, ventured to say :

“It seems to me that the portrait is about finished. How long now will it last?”

Munzel cast at her a look of reproach, and answered in a disappointed tone :

“Your suffering is about at an end. I will put the finishing touches on it this evening. I could have done without you, if I wished, for the past few days. But you know I am somewhat selfish, and had you come here. You see I am frank. Do you blame me for telling you so?”

She shook her pretty, dark locks and answered :

“No.”

Then rising and taking another pose, she added :

“Do you know I will miss these sittings when they will be over? I have grown so used to spend my days here!”

Munzel said nothing, but grew deadly pale. His palette trembled in his hand. Conchita remarked it. She continued, in her chatty way, as if to relieve him :

“Do you know that Rosalie, who spends her time with your servant-girl, said to me this morning : ‘When your picture is finished, what shall we do with our afternoons ? See what an important fact a mere picture can become in the path of life.’”

And she laughed. He, however, let her exhaust her joyous spirits, and when she had finished and remained silent for a moment, he began deliberately :

“You speak about yourself, but what shall I say of myself ? This delightful intimacy that has existed between us is about to end. You have grown to be my all-in-all, and now the charming dream is to end. I am going to lose you. And let me add that I can never hope to find your like again, or the pleasure I have experienced during these few weeks, that now seem so short. Before you began coming here I may say that I did not know you at all. You always seemed in my presence stiff and formal, almost repelling, and I could not realize half the grace and beauty that you concealed. But these days, now over, added a new zest to my life. Nobody but myself can comprehend the fullness of joy that they have given me. But it is all over now—we are about to be separated. This studio that you lit up by your presence will now grow as dark as a dungeon. This portrait, after you go, will leave behind it only a recollection of vanished pleasure.”

The soft and tender voice that had charmed the sensitive woman for a month past almost ended in a sigh. Unthinkingly, Conchita placed her hand on Munzel’s shoulder, to calm him, to comfort him, to make him understand how intensely she shared his pain. He did not look her in the face. He simply handed her a bouquet of forget-me-not flowers, such as he had painted on the picture of Madame Etchevarray. And this sentimental myosotis that reflected so clearly the whole nature of Frantz seemed to say to

Conchita, "You will always have me before you, and you can never forget him who is always thinking of you."

A sudden tenderness of feeling filled the heart of the young wife, and her eyes welled with tears that she could not restrain. The painter turned away, but again looked in her face with such an ardent expression that one would have thought they could have never separated from one another. A moment of painful silence followed. No sound, or word, or step intervened to remind them that they were not alone, and that they should not forget the principles, the laws, and conventionalities of society. Neither of them thought that there was a husband who trusted in their fidelity, their honor, and whom it would be an infamy to betray. They could see nothing but the flame that flashed from their eyes, that consumed their hearts ; the kisses that bloomed on their lips, the conquering, irresistible love that enveloped them.

Frantz was about to pronounce the irrevocable words, "I love you," but a sort of indefinable force prevented him. His heart sank in his bosom, and the vague feeling came over him that he was about to commit a crime. His warning sense of honor revolted, and to break the spell he abruptly rose. He looked in the face of the young woman who sat pale and trembling before him, and stammered, "We are both fools !"

He went over and opened the window, as if to let out the subtle and intoxicating poisons that disturbed his brain. He leaned on the sill and bathed his burning brow in the fresh air of the gardens that spread out before him. Conchita, impelled by an irresistible force, went over and sat down beside him. The penetrating fragrance of the earth, warmed by the first rays of spring, charmed their senses. The grass seemed to take on a greener hue ; the buds were opening as if to salute the sun ; the birds carolled among the leaves, and all nature was breathing of love. Frantz felt that he should turn around and retire. But before him was the woman, with her dreamy eyes, and

lips pale, like a dying flower. She could scarcely breathe, a consuming fire burned in her bosom, the very rays of the sun seemed to blind her. She clasped her companion in her arms, and in the silence of love everything was forgotten.

From this hour forth Talvanne remarked that Munzel no longer visited the Rue Saint-Dominique, and the uneasiness he felt before increased. He studied Conchita, but she was impassive. Women possess in the highest degree the gift of concealing their feelings. Where the wisest man would betray himself, the woman can go on unsuspected. As remarked, the painter no longer visited his friend, and Talvanne saw in this studied absence a mark of guiltiness that he wished to prove and that at the same time filled him with horror. Rameau accepted as all right the excuses of the painter, but regretted being deprived of his presence. One day, on arriving at the Medical Academy, the doctor, taking advantage of the fact that the proceedings had not yet begun, went over and sat down beside Talvanne and said :

“I am going, as soon as I leave here, to Frantz’s studio to see that portrait.”

And as Talvanne shrugged his shoulders, but made no answer, he continued :

“You are crusty to-day. As it is a question of pleasing my wife, you should have a little more politeness. You do not seem to care in the least about a matter that keenly interests her. She cannot help remarking it !”

“Well,” said Talvanne, “I’ll go with you.”

When the meeting was over, the doctor rose to go out, but was met by one of his colleagues, who engaged him in conversation. As he was delayed quite a while, Talvanne seemed to grow impatient. Rameau went over to him and said :

“I can’t go with you. Bonneuil wants me to accompany him on a dangerous case.”

“Very dangerous ?”

"Yes. He doesn't want to operate alone. Be kind enough to go to Frantz's studio and tell Conchita not to expect me. If I am not at home in time for dinner, don't wait for me."

"All right."

Rameau shook his friend's hand, and started away with his colleague. Talvanne went to Munzel's studio. As he went, he thought a good deal, and recalling to mind the various phases of the painter's character, he could not suppress an instinctive feeling of distrust, and until then unfounded, regarding Frantz. He grumbled to himself :

"In the first place, it is owing to the form of head. He is a subbrachycephalus, possessing all the bumps of selfishness, and of cunning instinct, and he can't be good. He is like the cuckoo, a lazy and thieving bird, that lays its eggs in its neighbors' nests. I have told Rameau so, over and over. But he will not see, or understand. Undoubtedly men like Munzel possess a certain charm. He is pleasing and amiable. Even I, though I had to force myself to tolerate his presence, succeeded in time. It is true I am a mesaticephalus, a man who weighs everything, with a leaning to criticism, but without a trace of mysticism."

In soliloquizing thus, he arrived at Munzel's studio. It was not the fifth story of a building, thronged like a hive, that he now occupied, but a pretty mansion, with court-yard, and garden. A pretty ante-chamber, the salon, a dining-room, and the parlor were on the ground-floor. On the first story, to which a stairway in carved wood led, were the studio, an immense room, a smoking-room, and a bedroom. The door was opened for Talvanne by Rosalie, who made herself useful around the premises during the two hours she was awaiting her mistress. A broad smile lit up her countenance on seeing Talvanne at the door. She exclaimed :

"Ah ! it is you ? You have come to see the portrait ? I am not a good judge, but I think it is splendid. Madame will see you at once ; I'll go and tell her you are here."

"Thanks, but don't go to any trouble; I know the way myself."

The good old dame returned to the parlor and Talvanne ascended the stairs. He reached the door of the smoking-room, and there the sounds of a piano came to him from the studio.

He thought to himself:

"If that's the way he is working at the portrait the sittings will last for a long time."

In spite of himself, he stood and listened. Munzel was singing a charming air of Mendelssohn, accompanying it on the piano. The words did not come to him distinct, but the expression of the melody was tender and pleasing. He opened the door and entered the smoking-room, whose heavy blinds almost shut out the daylight. In the semi-darkness, on the soft carpet that smothered the sound of his footsteps, Talvanne remained for a few moments motionless. The melody throbbed with this amorous couplet:

" Et sur ta lèvre en fleur
Je cueillerai les roses." *

Suddenly the melody ceased, as if the fingers had struck the last note; the sound died away, and the echo of a kiss broke the silence. Talvanne felt his heart throb, a cold thrill ran through his veins, he advanced a few steps, and, with a trembling hand, raised the curtain that separated the smoking-room from the studio, and saw seated before the piano Conchita and Frantz, clasped in each other's arms. The kiss, whose sweet echo he had heard, still united their lips. At the same moment, he heard the voice of Conchita, who said:

"What's that?" And that of Munzel, who answered, "Somebody is coming."

Then frightened, as if it was himself who had committed the wrong, Talvanne hastened from the room, and

* I will gather the roses on thy blooming lips.

did not stop until he had gained the stairway, where he grasped the banister to keep himself from falling.

Scarce had he beaten this retreat when Munzel appeared, and exclaimed, with affected pleasure :

"Ah ! it is you, my dear friend !"

The two men remained for a moment silent, gazing at one another, until at length Munzel, with downcast look, invited the alienist to come in, and whispered :

"Madame, it is Talvanne."

The alienist entered the studio. Conchita was standing beside the portrait, with her face turned from the light. She turned quickly around, cast a glance in the surprised face of her friend, and nonchalantly extended her hand.

He did not accept it, but said with suppressed uneasiness :

"Madame, I am instructed by your husband to say that he cannot come here for you, and to return home without awaiting him."

"Very well," replied Conchita, quietly.

She stepped back from the portrait, that hung on the easel in a favorable light, and asked :

"What do you think of it?"

A frown passed over Talvanne's face as he answered, without even glancing at the canvas :

"Admirable !"

His looks were fixed threateningly on Munzel, who endured them with forced coolness. Talvanne's attitude had not escaped Conchita's notice. She surmised that if she left, leaving the two men face to face, something serious might occur, and with an affected smile she said :

"Since my husband has neglected me, as he always does, you will accompany me home, will you not?"

"You don't need my company," Talvanne answered, sourly. "Rosalie is waiting for you down-stairs."

"I will send her on ahead, and you will come home with me in the carriage."

"Excuse me, I have pressing business to attend to."

"You can let it go for once." And as Talvanne was about to reply, she continued with an imperious air.

"I want you to do so."

He yielded silently, and, without speaking to Munzel, passed out. She adjusted her hat and shawl, and with a feverish shake of the hand, which expressed to Frantz all that she dared not say, she left the room. Talvanne was waiting at the carriage door. She entered, made him sit down beside her, and said to the coachman: "Drive home." The carriage rolled along, while both Talvanne and Conchita remained silent and thoughtful, each feeling that the first word spoken would lead to a terrible conversation. It was the woman who first lost patience, and boldly broached the subject that she felt could not be avoided:

"You acted rather strangely a few moments ago before your friend," she began, in an indignant tone.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, madame," replied Talvanne, with a bitterness he vainly tried to suppress; "but the man of whom you speak has never been my friend, thank God. I have never been mistaken in regard to him. The first day I met him I conceived an antipathy toward him, and I have never changed in regard to him. I have always considered him unfaithful, a liar, and a coward. Oh! no, he is not my friend, but he is your husband's friend!"

At these words, uttered in a sarcastic tone, Conchita shuddered. Her face flushed, and in an agitated tone, she asked haughtily:

"What do you suspect, Talvanne?"

"I suspect nothing," he replied. "I simply know. I caught you, on my arrival, in the arms of that miserable wretch. Yes, you, you for whom I had always entertained such affection, devotedness, and respect, I am now compelled to condemn with the utmost severity. And your husband, that man so superior in mind and heart, who actually adores you—you have sacrificed him for a Munzel. Where is the advantage in being superior to all one's

fellows, in possessing genius, in being universally admired, if the first brush-scratcher who comes along, with his languid air and empty phrases, can rob us of the joys of existence and dishonor us? Ah! you have done wrong, very wrong! You whom we loved so dearly! You were the only object of our thoughts; our sole desire was to please you and to render you happy. And, in a moment, you have sacrificed all that, and for what, I ask? Yes, for what? Ah! you have been ungrateful and unfaithful, and I, for one, can never forgive you."

He spoke with intense feeling, and Conchita, more touched by his sorrow than his anger, could not say a word in reply. She leaned back, and unaffectedly gave herself up to the excess of her grief. Talvanne resumed:

"And what imprudence you exhibited! You exposed yourself to the danger of being seen by whoever might have come along. When I think that only for an accident, which I now bless, your husband would have come along with me! And he would have surprised you. Do you know that he is a man who would kill both of you?"

"I know it."

Talvanne turned around to her, and with less harshness of tone continued:

"My dear friend, listen to me, I beg of you, with all your heart and mind. It is impossible to believe that you are as guilty as appearances would represent you. You yielded to a momentary impulse, but you are, nevertheless, a good and virtuous woman. You will be as you were before, what you ought to be. Think of all you foolishly risked, that you would have lost for nothing. Think of yourself, think of your husband."

Conchita's eyes flashed, and her face assumed an expression of furious hatred, as she replied:

"My husband is the cause of it all. It is he who led me into evil. It is he who is answerable for my offence."

"He!" exclaimed Talvanne. "Your language is monstrous!"

"But it is true. If he himself were here in your place, I would repeat what I have said, and he dare not answer me. How could he deem it a crime for me to yield to an impulse of the senses—he, who believes only in matter? According to him, humanity is guided only by its instincts. He puts it on the same level with the brute. What, then, was there to stop me? The sentiment of duty, you would say! But that sentiment is conscience, and conscience is the soul. You know well that he does not believe in any such thing. My ears still tingle with his sneers—poor, superstitious creature, as he called me—when I endeavored to defend my belief. You have been a witness of these scenes; you took my part without any other result than to be made the butt with me of his proud philosophy. He broke down at pleasure all the barriers that would have restrained me. The commandments of my God bound me to fidelity and respect for him; he declared that that God did not exist, and that heaven was empty. My mother, from my infancy, had taught me the necessity of being good and virtuous during this life, in order to be rewarded in the next; he taught me that nothing of us exists after death. And what did he want to substitute for this consoling faith and salutary fear? Vague moral principles, variable, since they are the conceptions of minds liable to change; frail, since they are essentially human. And you are indignant because I say that he is the cause of all that has happened; because I hold him responsible for my offence. Yes, I repeat, if there is any crime, he is the real criminal; and he only seems all the more execrable to me when I think how loving, faithful, and devoted I would have been if he had not done all in his power to prevent me from being so."

"But he loves you, loves you passionately," exclaimed Talvanne, confused by such an unexpected confession.

"Yes, let us talk of it—of his love!" resumed Conchita, angrily. "What did he love in me? My body! That is all he sought. He saw only the pleasure of possessing

me, because I was young and beautiful. A materialist, his passion has been for matter only, and nothing could be more low, abject, and repulsive than his sentiment. He did not wish to share any of my aspirations, to realize any of my dreams ; he rejected my every ideal. He wanted a wife just as he wanted his dinner, and he took me. Well, he has repelled me, disgusted me, and I thus repeat, not at random but deliberately, not to defend myself but to condemn him, that he is the cause of all."

There was a moment of silence.

Talvanne was astounded at what he had heard. He could never have suspected that Conchita had such a bitter leaven in her nature. He felt that the arguments she had adduced could be easily refuted, but he likewise realized the ravages that Rameau's theories had made in the young wife's mind. And, with his good sense, he chafed on seeing that his good friend had been unconsciously guilty of the imprudence that had induced all this trouble.

How often had he discussed with him the destructive effects of materialism on the mind of woman. From the moment that everything is confined, for humanity, between the narrow limits of birth and death, from the moment that nothing is to be expected after death, can there be any other end in life than unmitigated pleasure? The watch-word of existence would be—enjoyment. There would no longer be question of duty or sacrifice. Everything that would not offer an immediate and real satisfaction would be deception. And the end would then be a complete lapse of morality, wholesale license.

Conchita roused him from his reflections. She said:

"Do not believe, however, that I justify myself because I accuse my husband. He has done nothing to attach me to him by an indestructible bond ; he risked destroying in my mind the pure faith of my youth, but he has not succeeded. I believe in a severe and just God, who forbids sin and punishes it. I know I am guilty, and I suffer unspeakably. I yielded to an impulse, because I was not protected against

my own weakness, but I condemn that weakness and know I must make amends for it."

At these words Talvanne raised his head.

"And how will you make amends for it?"

"Will not the recollection of my fall be a continual torture for me? If I did not sincerely regret my offence, do you think I would vehemently accuse my husband with not having so acted that I would not have committed it? But that is not all. I have retained the sincerity of my faith, and I tremble at the thought of my punishment. I shall have a terrible account to render some day."

"Then, if you so sincerely regret your fault, you ought to resolve not to repeat it."

Conchita's face assumed a downcast expression, and, in an agitated voice, she answered:

"What do you ask of me, then?"

He looked at her severely and replied:

"Never to see Munzel again!"

She answered in a feeble tone:

"Will I have sufficient courage?"

"You must have it."

"But if what you exact is beyond my strength? You have no idea of the influence he exercises over me. He has absolute control of my mind; he has the completest moral possession of me. My mind is identified with his own, and my heart responds to his voice like a servant to his master. All that he dreams, all that he desires, all that he aspires to, I dream, desire, and aspire to also. I am but an echo of himself. We have the same tastes, the same sympathies, the same belief. Never was woman created to belong to a man more than I am to him. Since I met him for the first time I had a confused notion of that accord between our two natures; and, instinctively, I turned away from him. I did my utmost to keep apart from him. A will independent of mine brought us together; in an instant our souls recognized one another, and went out to one another. I forgot everything, renounced everything. I was no longer

myself ; I existed in him, and I cannot understand by what means I could have resisted. How do you think I can be stronger in the future than in the past?"

"Take care," exclaimed Talvanne, exasperated by that passionate declaration ; "if you have not the strength to separate yourself from him, I will have the strength to separate him from you. I have been able to talk to you calmly, because I have for you all the affection of a father for his child, but I have a horror of your offence, and to permit you to continue it would be making me an accomplice. Do not imagine that I am weak enough to submit to that. I let you explain your grievances a moment ago. But do not believe that you thereby made me forget those of your husband. A single word would be enough to enlighten him, and the situation would then become terrible. Do not compel me to have recourse to such an extremity. Give me the right to respect his peace and to assure yours. On leaving you I am going to return to Munzel."

"I forbid you to do anything of the kind !" exclaimed Conchita, with flashing glance. "No explanations between you and him. I compelled you to accompany me in order to avoid all difficulty."

"Then make him retire, leave here altogether. He is free to do so, and his artistic taste will furnish a sufficient pretext. It is necessary that he shall not be exposed to come any more into Rameau's presence. Your husband will doubtless suffer by his absence, for he thinks a great deal of him. That is one of the invariable and regrettable phases of the comedy of human life. Do you accept these conditions?"

"I do."

"See, above all, that his departure be not sudden and unexpected. We must all play our part so that your husband will suspect nothing. That is very important. A man such as he, so useful to his fellow-men, should not be made the victim of a vulgar misfortune which would blight his admirable intellect. The husband has been sacrificed, let us at least respect the scientist."

Conchita shook her head gravely, and said :

“Take care, Talvanne ; to associate yourself too closely with him is to court danger. The atheist draws down the wrath of heaven. Everything around him will be blasted with misfortune. For me it will be a just chastisement, but for you——”

The alienist looked at Conchita, and then with a quiet smile, replied :

“Let whatever may come happen, madame. For five and twenty years I have loved Rameau like a brother ; and, believe me, I am a good Christian, but I assure you I would rather be lost with him than be saved with somebody whom I know.”

The carriage turned into the yard of the Rue Saint-Dominique. Talvanne alighted, respectfully offered his arm to Conchita, and both entered the house.

CHAPTER V.

THE SEPARATION.

A FEW weeks later the opening of the Salon took place, and Munzel's work scored a triumph. Certainly, never had the painter's talent attained such perfection, and the work was justly pronounced a master-piece. Exhibited in the apartment of honor, Conchita's portrait attracted the admiration of everybody. Dressed in deep black, her pale brow shining from under her dark, wavy hair, her large, expressive eyes turned heavenward, as if in ecstasy, she was a type of unsurpassed beauty. From her wide sleeve, open at the elbow, her bare arm protruded, and lay carelessly on the folds of her dress. In her hand was a small bouquet of forget-me-nots, the only bright feature of that sombre picture. The frame was of ebony, and the whole ensemble seemed to breathe of mourning.

Rameau, delighted at the success of his friend, was not

wholly happy, however. Munzel was not there to taste the first joys of his popularity. A letter from his father had suddenly called him to Stuttgart a month previously, and the little news they had from him did not hold out any sign of his return. The doctor was never tired of going to see Conchita's portrait. He loved to stop in the midst of the groups that stood near it, and delighted in listening to the praises bestowed on the beauty of his wife and the talent of his friend. Quickly recognized by his herculean stature and massive head, he soon attracted attention; he would then retire abruptly to escape the embarrassment of his own glory. He read with pride the eulogistic notices of it in the journals, but would not admit the slightest criticism of it. He wished only unanimity of praise for that work that was doubly dear to him.

The indifference of Talvanne excited his indignation. The alienist, when led before the picture, did not either praise or condemn it; he remained sullen and almost silent. Asked by Rameau to give his opinion of it, he expressed his admiration of the original, but retained an absolute reserve concerning the picture. Rameau made no answer, as a number of persons were standing by. But as he left him, he was evidently irritated. The following day Talvanne dined at the Rue Saint-Dominique. Rameau, during the evening, abruptly asked him:

"I see you are not pleased with the portrait, and I would like you to tell me what fault you find with it."

At these words Conchita, who was working near the table, started, and her hands, as they held the crochet-work, trembled visibly. A glance, swift as an arrow, shot from her eyes, and she turned her head so as not to appear in the full light of the lamp.

As Talvanne paid no attention, wishing to avoid a discussion that he felt might take a dangerous turn, Rameau earnestly resumed:

"Yes, what fault do you find with that portrait? If you imagine that I did not understand your silence, when I

brought you to see it at the Exposition, and that I do not read the meaning of your looks, you are mistaken. You are not a painter yourself; how, then, can Munzel's success affect you? But why, after all, do I question you? I should be satisfied on that point long ago; you have always been jealous of Frantz."

"I," explained Talvanne, abruptly rising from his seat; "I? Why——"

He made an indignant gesture, and was about to blurt out all he knew, but he chanced to suddenly glance at Conchita, and he answered with forced calmness:

"It is because I naturally dislike painting. I do not find anything frank or sincere about it. It is wholly artificial, mechanical. It is an art, but a hypocritical and disloyal art."

He hissed forth these words as if he intended to smite an enemy with them.

"Why don't you add, like himself," broke in Rameau, ironically. "You must be lacking in charity to speak thus, before me, of a man whom I esteem and love."

"Well, let us admit that I do lack charity," replied Talvanne coldly.

He cast a glance toward Conchita. She was working busily again, apparently calm and indifferent, with down-cast look. After a moment's silence, she rose, walked around the room, and turning to her husband, said:

"I am tired, and I am going up-stairs. Besides, your discussions are anything but entertaining."

She reached her hand to Talvanne and left the room.

"You see, you have driven away Conchita," said Rameau to his friend. "She did not like to say that she found you dull and displeasing; she preferred to leave."

"Good! good!" growled Talvanne, stretching back in his chair. "I will make my peace with her to-morrow."

"She needs to be treated with consideration," replied Rameau. "You know that I do not conceal anything from you. I may then confide our hopes to you. Nature in its

beneficence replaces those who die with those who are born. It deprived Conchita of her mother ; it gives her back a child."

Talvanne remained motionless, as if petrified. A frown passed over his face, and he seemed lost in a painful reverie.

"That's the way you receive a piece of news that fills me with joy," continued Rameau, after a moment's silence. "In truth, I sometimes ask myself if you have the slightest affection for me, and if you are not the most selfish man that could possibly be found. A child in this house would mean noise and racket. That would be annoying to you, would it not? A child ! that would be an intrusion. Why should it come?"

Rameau rose and walked up and down the room. He felt a hand placed on his shoulder. He saw Talvanne before him, somewhat pale, but smiling.

"No, it would be no intrusion," he said ; "this child that you so desire and hope for. It is enough that you will love it, my good friend, in order to make it dear to me. If it be a boy, rest assured that I will assist you in bringing him up and educating him. He will be all in all to both of us. He will grow up under our eyes. We will make him a learned man, like his father, and we will cherish an ambition for him that we did not entertain for ourselves."

"Ah ! my good Talvanne, I find you are yourself again," exclaimed Rameau, cordially grasping his hand.

"But if it be a girl?" remarked Talvanne.

"Well, then," replied Rameau, "we will hope that she may be like her mother. That will be sufficient."

A cloud seemed to pass over Talvanne's countenance anew. But Rameau's joyous spirit made a happy and prompt diversion. And thus smoking and chatting the two friends continued to pass the rest of the evening, mapping out those pleasant projects which always charm the present hour, but which the future so seldom realizes.

Conchita gave birth to a daughter. She was named Adrienne, at the suggestion of Talvanne, her godfather. Munzel, who had been travelling for the past three months in Greece, sent his tenderest wishes for the little visitor, and a superb pair of antique bracelets for the mother. Rameau was disappointed at not having his friend with him on the baptismal day, but the radiant joyousness of Talvanne compensated him. The alienist grew to fairly adore the little cherub, pink and pretty, as it lay smiling in its cradle. He used to sit down beside it and watch it calmly sleeping. He talked to it, and tried to "please" it, until the infant soon grew to know him, and used to laugh and crow when he came near.

"You shall be my daughter," he used to say to it; "I will not follow the example of your papa, who got married; I shall remain a bachelor, and you will have no rival in my heart. You will be very beautiful, and I will take you to walk and stop at every shop, for I am not an illustrious man and will have plenty of leisure, and will live to please you. You will be happy, I promise you. Old Talvanne will see that your happiness will not be marred. Sleep, my little darling, and dream the pleasantest of dreams; for dreams are, after all, about the best things of life."

Rameau listened, smiling, and he loved Talvanne all the more for the tenderness he manifested toward the babe. He sometimes said to him:

"You are a surprising character. You have taken complete possession of my daughter. I do not seem to exist for her any longer. Be generous, and leave me a little of her affection."

"You know nothing about children," Talvanne would growl; "go and devote yourself to your studies."

And he would thus almost put Rameau out of the room. Conchita, like a proud queen, happy on seeing the future of her dynasty assured, revelled in the splendid luxury with which her husband surrounded her. She bloomed in all her radiant beauty, and largely contributed to attract

the great throng that gathered to the receptions of the distinguished man at the mansion in the Rue Saint-Dominique. It was in the last days of the imperial reign. Paris revelled in display and pleasure. A new city, large and enchanting, built of sculptured stone and marble palaces, had arisen, as if by magic, in the place of the old black and tortuous capital. The richness of the furniture was in keeping with the splendor of the residences, and industry had produced the most sumptuous decorations for the embellishment of modern Paris. It was not the best taste, to be sure, that determined the choice of these marvels, but it was boundless wealth that paid for them. Everything seemed rich then in Paris the brilliant and superb, or at least everything appeared to be. Money flowed like water. And never did the golden calf assist at an assemblage like that which danced to the jingling of coin for its music.

Rameau lent himself readily to the whims of his wife, and turned his mansion into a real museum. He gave fêtes that caused as much newspaper comment as his own works. He was happy. Still, one dark cloud obscured his heaven. For two years past Munzel had only barely set foot in Paris, before he was off again for distant lands. At the Rue Saint-Dominique he appeared cold, formal, and embarrassed. His attitude toward Rameau and Conchita had completely changed. While in their house he seemed to suffer intense torture. He scarce looked at little Adrienne, and he could hardly be persuaded to take her in his arms or kiss her. What was still more surprising for Rameau was that Talvanne seemed to regard this estrangement as quite natural.

"Painters, you see," said the alienist to his friend, "are only impressed with the external value of men or things. For them the substance, the heart, is nothing. Form is everything. What interest do you think Munzel could take in a youngster with chubby nose and staring eyes, a toothless mouth and hairless head? He will not study

the awakening of intelligence in that little brain, the growth of recognition in those staring eyes. The lisping of that little mouth only wearies him. But he would go into ecstasy before some sun-browned beggar-woman in her picturesque rags ; he will study her, paint her picture, and then will pay no further attention to her. His horizon is bounded by his sight. For him the rest has no existence ; and then he is an unmitigated egoist, as I have often before told you, and an egoist does not love children, because people lavish attention on them instead of on himself. He is going away to Palermo. He would rather be there than with us. And I am not sorry for his going—*bon voyage !*”

Rameau nodded his head, but made no answer ; something unusual with him. He now asked himself if his friend after all might not be right, and the painter was not too indifferent. After the warm friendship he had shown him, how could Frantz leave him so easily ? He did not then remember the years gone by ? And his mature manhood was to belie the professions of his youth ? How was it possible ? He began to think that Munzel was the victim of some hidden sorrow. Such misanthropy, such an inexplicable estrangement, must have been caused by some secret suffering. He resolved not to let the painter depart without questioning him on the subject. And with this purpose in view he repaired one morning to his studio.

It was no longer the blonde and pale Munzel that he found one day stretched on his couch, his brain on fire with despair. During the past two years the painter had grown gray and his face bronzed under the sun of the Orient. Standing on a high ladder, Frantz was working on a painting ordered by the King of Wurtemberg for one of the halls of his palace. On seeing the doctor he did not utter an exclamation of joy as formerly. He blushed, and, laying down his palette, slowly descended.

Rameau, standing motionless, scanned the countenance of his friend as he approached, seeking to discover some

mark of the mysterious trouble that he had suspected. He saw nothing unusual in him, except that he was somewhat stiff and formal. He reached out his hand to the doctor, who pressed it warmly, saying :

“Munzel, you seem to have lost all affection for me.”

At these words the painter was visibly affected, and, fixing his eyes on the doctor, replied :

“Why do you say that?”

“Because you are so changed in the past two years that I am anxious to know what has caused it. You, who used to live with me like a brother, now spend eleven months of the year away in foreign countries without any other reason than pure caprice. One would imagine you were trying to avoid me. For when, by chance, you come to Paris, it is with difficulty that I can see you ; I have either to send for you or to come to you myself. Is there anything troubling you? Are you sick? Can I cure you or comfort you?”

Munzel, gloomy and chilling in manner, sat down without making any reply. He remained for a moment with downcast eyes, and then murmured :

“Well, yes, I am unhappy.”

And as Rameau was about to further question him, he continued :

“But you cannot—nobody can do anything for me. It is a malady for which there is no cure.”

“Are you in love?”

“Yes.”

“And who is she that causes you such pain?”

“I cannot see her any more ; I must not see her.”

“Does she live in Paris?”

Munzel hesitated an instant, and replied :

“Yes.”

“And it is to avoid seeing her that you keep so far away, for such a length of time. But what is it that keeps you apart?”

The painter, with a look of distress, replied :

"Do not question me further, you only add to my distress. I do not wish to say anything ; I am in despair, that's all. I am going away this time for a longer stay than usual. I shall be gone for two or three years, perhaps. But do not accuse me of indifference. How could I forget all the kindness you lavished on me? It is that which pains me. And still I must absent myself. Nothing could induce me to remain."

Rameau endeavored in his philosophic way to comfort and encourage him. But to anything that the doctor advised the painter decisively answered, "No." They remained together for two hours, and the doctor did not leave the studio until he had made Munzel promise that before leaving Paris he would come and dine with him.

The following day he received a brief note, in which Frantz informed him that an unexpected event called him away hurriedly. He begged him to present his apologies to his friends of the Rue Saint-Dominique, and expressed to him his kindest regards. Conchita listened to the reading of the note with smiling impassibility. She had her baby on her lap, and kept fondling it. As to Talvanne, he shrugged his shoulders and muttered some words in a surly tone about the annoyance of knowing and dealing with absurd people. Rameau alone was keenly disappointed.

Life at the Rue Saint-Dominique gradually resumed its former course, and the fugitive, if he was not forgotten, at least ceased to be a subject of angry discussion. Rameau continued his labors in the fields of anatomy and physiology, giving a bolder impulse to modern science. The former revolutionist was now unanimously considered one of the most penetrating minds of the age. More lucky than the majority of innovators, he had the satisfaction of seeing his theories adopted and praised.

His ideas had expanded and shaped themselves into a clear and profound system. He had ceased to be aggressive ; he no longer exhibited the violence of a sectary, but

the calm and firm certainty of a master. He had repudiated none of the principles of his youth, he simply presented them with less harshness of tone. The fire was as intense, but it was hidden under the conservatism of age. His system was eagerly followed, and when he consented to deliver a course of lectures at the Sorbonne, Gerson Hall was thronged by all classes of people.

He possessed, in addition to a rare clearness of exposition, the art of developing a subject in a manner that lent to it an absorbing interest. The form of his discourses was as remarkable as their substance. Reproduced from the stenographic reports, they were accurate enough to pass into the hands of the publisher without revision or retouching. He was popularly known as the Michelet of science. He possessed that admirable historian's talent of evocation, and excelled in giving a palpable body, a tangible form to the most abstract and airy conceptions. His iron constitution permitted him to perform the most excessive labor, as in the vigor of his youth. His life was devoted to two objects—to his family and to science, and he seemed to be exceptionally favored on one side as the other.

Still, he was not perfectly happy. Between Conchita and himself a cloud was continually gathering. But there was no longer a word of controversy between the excessive religiousness of his wife and his own free-thought.

They both feared one another, and studiously avoided these dangerous subjects that had so cruelly divided them on several occasions. They remained in their respective positions, like exhausted combatants who have felt one another's strength and who refrain from engaging in conflict again, knowing that the result would be undecided.

Conchita's fervor was redoubled, however, and her pious exercises were never more regular. With an easy tranquillity, which, doubtless, may be attributed to her Spanish origin, she mingled the sacred and profane, and hastened to church almost as soon as she had left the ball-room.

She dined luxuriously on Saturday at two o'clock in the morning, after having abstained from meat on Friday. Her faith, intolerant in the moral order, was indulgent in the material order. A woman who did not fulfil her religious duties filled her with horror, but she received in her parlor ladies whose levity was notorious. Her husband used to joke about it with Talvanne, but he was careful to say nothing about it before her.

He loved her, as in former days, with the passion of a man already grown old, who has found in love a renewal of youth. Perhaps, curious phase of human nature, he even loved her a little more on account of that very fanaticism that was the occasion of their disagreements. He always felt that she was in rebellion against him, and when he approached her, she seemed to experience an access of repugnance. Still she had not done anything to cause an estrangement between them, observing in this regard the rule of her religion. She tolerated him, but that was all. He, good even to weakness, overlooked all her caprices, loaded her with favors, and poured a flood of gold into her indifferent hands. His daughter was on earth to him the divinity that he refused to admit in heaven. He spent whole hours chatting with her, explaining to her the simplest things. He amused himself with little Adrienne, and forgot everything else in her presence—his patients, visits, professional duties—to obey every look of her soft blue eyes.

For the child, though bearing a striking resemblance to her mother, had, nevertheless, blonde hair and blue eyes. She was the picture of Conchita, with the exception of the black, wavy hair, and the flashing, dark eyes. And, brought up like a princess under the careful watchfulness of the faithful Rosalie, Rameau's daughter knew only joy and laughter. She never knew what it was to cry, and if she felt any pain, her father discovered some medical secret to assuage her suffering. She had for a continual playmate, whether in the garden, at the Champs Elysées,

or elsewhere, a little lad twelve years of age, whom she called Rob, and who was a grandson of Doctor Servant.

Reverses of fortune had overtaken the family of the good doctor of Lagny, and his son, captain of a battery of artillery, had died in Mexico, leaving his wife and only child in a dependent condition. But Rameau was on hand, and remembering what he owed to his old friend, he obtained for the widow the position of inspectress of the Maternity Society, while he himself took charge of the education of little Robert.

"He will be my successor," he said to Madame Servant; and, seeing Robert so attentive to little Adrienne, pleasant thoughts of what the future might bring naturally suggested themselves to his mind.

Talvanne, who had just turned his fiftieth year, and, with his clean-shaven face and long, gray hair, looked much older, felt the weight of his position growing with his years. As an authority on medical jurisprudence, he was without a rival. Consulted every time a great criminal fell into the hands of justice, he yielded, in the honesty of his soul, in favor of assassins on the principle of moral irresponsibility. But in difficult cases his high professional ability was confirmed by the most ingenious observations and clear conclusions. Without appropriating any glory to himself he profited by the European reputation of his asylum to perform countless secret deeds of charity. He had in his institution almost as many non-paying as paying inmates. And he interested himself more in favor of the poor than the rich.

This good man, however, had one weakness. He could not bear the sight of journalists. Whenever a reporter accosted him, apropos of some notorious criminal or some inmate of his institution, the old man could not help breaking out in denunciation of the scandalous curiosity of all those who wrote for the papers. When he spoke of journalists, it was with indignation, and he generally wound up his opinion of them with the remark: "They are the

poisoners of public opinion." But at the same time it must be remarked in justice to him that he was a vehement defender of the liberty of the press, and if a journalist got into difficulty by the too open expression of his opinion, he was his most ardent defender. He was happy, and satisfied with the world around him. His goodness of heart was inexhaustible. He loved science and liberty, and defended both under all circumstances.

The existence of this family—for thus we must characterize such friends as Rameau and Talvanne—passed in peace and happiness, when the Franco-German war broke out like a thunderbolt. In an instant all the joyousness of life was changed. The city, so brilliant, luxurious, became a vast camp. The fêtes were succeeded by the clash of arms. The feverish agitation that always precedes battle and the stunning stupor that follows defeat, took possession of that population so habituated to universal idolatry, and so confident of its own invincibility. Wounded pride was transformed into fury. Unable to repel the invasion, the Parisians overthrew the empire. In default of a victory, they inaugurated a revolution. A certain portion of the population approved of it. A wave descended from Belleville and Montmartre, rolled through the muddy quarters of the capital, smashing the imperial eagles and insignia, mutilating monuments, and upsetting a government that was already tottering. Then a dull and mournful silence followed the orgie. The city that was always so ready for a fête, now prepared for a siege. The trees of the Bois de Boulogne, in the shade of which, the week before, the most elegant equipages rolled along, were now cut down. A deep melancholy suddenly took the place of unbridled gaiety, and it was plain that Paris, after having scandalized the world by its folly, was now about to astonish it by its heroism.

Rameau never dreamed of leaving the city. His patriotic heart had been cruelly wounded by the first results of the war. From the outset he foresaw the investment of

the capital, and took his precautions in consequence. He laid in an ample stock of provisions, and had Talvanne send home to their families a number of his patients in the hospitals. He and Talvanne, besides, organized an ambulance service, at the insane asylum, where two hundred wounded could be cared for at a time. Rameau, on account of his illustrious reputation, was at once appointed by the Provisional Government to take charge of the entire medical service. He accepted this weighty duty with ardent patriotism.

This man, endowed with such a marvellous faculty for work, and who could do nothing by halves, gave his days and nights to the task confided to him. In wind and snow, clad in his civil costume—for he had a horror of a uniform and decorations—with the Red Cross of the Geneva Society on his arm, he was continually rushing from the hospitals to the advance-posts, from the Palais de l'Industrie, his headquarters, to Talvanne's ambulance station, his eyes open for everything around him, regulating every detail, stopping at a soldier's cot to readjust a bandage, as he passed by, giving instructions to the orderlies and nurses, and, when called on, performing the most serious operations on the mangled soldiers brought back from the front.

He could be seen during the day, in the evening, at all hours of the night, in the most unexpected places, astonishing everybody by his prodigious activity, and the strength that could endure such an unbroken strain. Still, he never seemed to be in better form, and not a mark of fatigue could be traced on his energetic face. The only change that could be noticed in him was a softness of manner. His pupils would no longer recognize him. No more bursts of temper, or angry gestures, or stormy scoldings that used to terrify all the officials at the hospitals. Even his legendary frown no longer appeared on his forehead. One could but think that the misfortunes of his country had softened the manner of the great man, and that, seeing everybody around him suffering, he tried to bring to

them all the comfort possible. He did not utter a harsh word, under any provocation, when extracting a ball, or cutting off a limb of a poor, wounded soldier. The surgeons who served with him used to say:

“Isn’t Rameau changed !” “What a different man he is !”

But he was himself all along, in his marvellous skill of hand, and ingenious knowledge of treating disease. The uncleanness of the hospitals, natural under such conditions, swept away large numbers of the patients, and he spoke to Talvanne about inventing a new disinfectant of irresistible power. And so, one night, in his laboratory in the Rue Saint-Dominique, the lights that gleamed through the window-panes told that the scientist was engaged in one of his usual experiments. About three o’clock in the morning, a loud detonation was heard, that aroused the whole house in affright. Conchita and Rosalie rushed to the laboratory, and there, in the midst of an acrid vapor, found Rameau, with his hands torn by the exploded glass, and a ghastly wound on his forehead. He did not seem in the least alarmed, and, observing his wife’s fright, simply said:

“It’s nothing. The mixture was a little too strong, and the thing burst.”

“But you’re hurt,” cried Conchita, wiping the blood from his face.

“Only a scratch. Anyway, it’s all right, as I discovered what I was looking for. And that, too, by a lucky accident. It was the simplest thing in the world, and I only wonder that I didn’t think of it before. But that’s usually the way. If half the inventors would only tell the truth they would admit that most of their success was the result of chance. Chance is the god of science.”

“But,” exclaimed Conchita, “you came near losing your life ! How imprudent you are !”

“Ah ! my dear, what is my life in comparison with the preservation of the lives of thousands of others ? But it is getting cold. I have no more to do. Let us go to bed.”

The next day he sent for one of the most noted druggists in Paris, and offered him the newly-discovered mixture at a very low figure. The bargain was quickly closed between the scientist who worked in the cause of humanity, and the merchant who worked to put more money in his pocket. This powerful disinfectant produced the results anticipated, and the mortality in the hospitals the following week was reduced by one-half.

The activity of Rameau, during this trying period, was manifested in the most various ways. After having devoted himself, with intense ardor, to a discovery of general use, he now turned his attention to a special case. A scout who had his knee shattered by a ball, in a reconnoissance, was brought to the Vincennes asylum, turned into a hospital by Talvanne. The projectile had entered the calf of the leg, penetrated the bone, and fractured the knee-cap. All the surgeons recommended amputation. But the wounded man was young, and not at all resigned to losing his limb. Rameau sympathized with him, and undertook to save the threatened member. He succeeded, but it was regarded as a miracle of skill and care. One day, when the wounded man was able to limp around, he said to Rameau:

“Doctor, you have acted the part of God to me.”

Rameau smiled, and answered:

“Yes, my brave fellow.”

And, after a moment's silence, he turned around and said to Talvanne:

“If there was no one but God to mend broken legs, the manufacturers of crutches would be all millionaires.”

“It is Rameau who mends broken legs, but it is God who has made Rameau,” gravely answered Talvanne.

The doctor looked at him, and jocosely asked:

“Are you sure of that?”

“Yes, except it was the devil who made you, and I wouldn't be surprised if it was.”

“Change the subject; here comes my wife.” For it

must be told, Conchita had shaken off her habitual indolence, and, in her way, rivalled the doctor in her good work. Her charity was manifested every day in succoring the needy and tending the wounded. She spent several hours daily in the hospitals, soothing the dying and praying at the bedside of the dead. Her piety had ceased to be a luxury. And Rameau, with a secret tenderness of feeling, followed his wife in the exercise of her comforting mission, happy in the radiant sunshine that her beauty shed around her in those dark days.

Rameau, Talvanne, and Conchita dined every evening in the Rue Saint-Dominique. The disasters of this lamentable time had drawn closer the bonds of their friendship, and when, after an excursion to the zone of the forts, in the midst of the advance posts, the doctor returned tired and chilled, it was a delight for him to find his wife and daughter and Talvanne awaiting him in the warm and cheerful dining-room. To be removed from the horrors of battle, from the ambulances filled with the groaning wounded, to leave the sight of the snow that enveloped the city like a great shroud, and to come into his house and enjoy for a few hours the company of those so dear to him, was happiness indeed.

Little Adrienne, more favored than so many other children, under the privations of the siege, grew, and was happy. And her blue eyes and blonde hair lit up for Rameau the dark and desolate future. He used to sit down in the evenings at the corner of the fire, with his little daughter on his knee, listening to her childish babble, and caressing her with those brawny hands over which so much blood flowed every day.

In the midst of his numerous preoccupations, one thought continued to trouble Rameau—what had become of Munzel? He often spoke of him, without remarking the forced silence of Conchita and Talvanne. He expressed the most anxious surmises concerning him. Frantz, like all the Germans, had served in the army, and before the war he

was an officer in the landwehr. What had become of him? In what country was he when the news of the war reached him? What did he do? Was he called home? If so, did he remain in Germany? Or had the necessities of the campaign brought him into France?

Talvanne received all these conjectures with an indifferent air.

"Don't trouble yourself about him," he said. "Munzel is too shrewd to expose himself to danger. He is in some safe spot, taking advantage of the war to get ideas for military pictures. He is a practical coon, who knows how to utilize massacre and make money out of destruction. You are very kind to worry so much about him. I am sure he does not worry much about us."

This time, Conchita, who hitherto had not uttered a word when Talvanne attacked Frantz in her presence, arose pale and agitated, her voice trembling with emotion.

"What you say is unworthy of you," she cried. "I cannot understand how my husband can listen to you with patience. As for me I cannot listen to it longer."

And taking up her child in her arms, as if she did not wish to let the infant hear Talvanne's denunciation of Munzel, she passed out of the room. Talvanne lowered his look before the questioning glance of Rameau, and regretting his forgetfulness in talking so frankly, he adroitly changed the topic of conversation, and after a quarter of an hour bade his friend good-night and withdrew.

CHAPTER VI.

A TRAGIC MEETING.

FOR three months Paris had been besieged, reduced to the verge of starvation, without fuel, and, worse than all, deprived of all news from the provinces. What took place in the intrenched camp of the Germans was a problem that everybody was trying to solve, without success. Surmises of every kind were entertained, elucidated, from time to time, by the finding of a German journal in the pocket of some of the enemy's dead. And this news only brought the account of fresh disasters, of the retreat of the relieving armies, so anxiously awaited, amid the snow and frost, along the roads blocked by fugitives, of prisoners captured by the thousand in a skirmish, and the thirty thousand in a battle, until the Germans, tired of gathering in the broken and disbanded defenders, let them escape, certain that they would recapture them on the morrow. And then, in the midst of these dismal pictures traced by the hand of the enemy, a sudden gleam of joy would flash from some paragraph, telling of an advantage gained by some daring commander, and betraying, through the prejudiced account of the writer, a check or a defeat suffered by the invader. During those days one knew not whether to hope or despair. A stubborn struggle it was, but like that of a swimmer in mid-ocean, with the waves raging around him, and his eyes seeking a horizon that he knew was not within his reach.

And in proportion as the situation grew more serious, the resistance of the people of Paris grew more resolute and stoic. In the freezing garrets, misery reigned supreme and death mowed down the weak and the young. The pall of desolation grew blacker every day; the suffering grew more intense; the people murmured, complained, but never weakened for a moment. Along the streets, covered with muddy snow, lines of women could be seen at the

doors of the bakers' and the butchers' shops waiting patiently for their rations of black bread and horse-flesh to be doled out to them. On the west side of the river the shells fell with a savage regularity. A corpse was removed from the pavement, a wounded passer-by was picked up, the street-gamin walking along stopped an instant to look at a pool of blood, resuming his song as he passed on, and the besieger outside continued the slaughter. The city, so given to pleasure, had quickly grown habituated to pain. And now it slept, rocked by the roar of cannon, as it had hitherto by the gay refrains of the theatres, balls, and concerts.

Inaction was what weighed most heavily on the besieged. The suspense of waiting, under the rain of fire from the German batteries, was more painful to endure than the tumultuous dash of a bloody sortie. But fights were rare. The government seemed to have reserved the forces confined in Paris, for a supreme occasion, vaguely expected and never coming. The impatience of the populace gave way to irritation. Dark rumors were heard in the suburbs. An uprising had taken place on the 31st of October, and it became evident that if they did not fling the Parisian forces against the Germans, they would turn and fight one another.

It was near the close of November; the weather had grown still colder, and winter seemed to have joined hands with the enemy. The soldiers were frozen dead in the trenches. Dark despair settled down on the doomed city. It was necessary to revive by battle those unfortunates benumbed by inertia and weakened by famine. A sudden movement, a dull grating of the machine of defence announced that important events were at hand. For three days the rumor had been noised in the city that the army of the Loire had made an advance movement, and that the Paris garrison was to make a sortie in conjunction with its attack.

On November 30th bridges were thrown across the

Marne, and the forts poured a deluge of fire on the German lines. Meantime, a determined advance was made toward Villiers and Champigny, bringing sixty thousand French into collision with the bulk of the Saxon and Wurtemberg forces, massed on the heights. The shock was severe and the enemy fell back. The weather was magnificent and the frost gleamed on the hills under the bright winter sun. The roar of the artillery rang out in the dry air, and the smoke rose in steamy clouds. The troops were marching hurriedly along the streets of Vincennes. The corps engaged had pressed forward from the ground occupied in the beginning of the action, and reinforcements were being continually hurried forward.

Rameau, who at the beginning of the affair, placed his ambulance service at Saint Maur, was impatiently pacing up and down in the yard of a candle-factory, the walls and roof of which had been battered by the bombardment. Talvanne, seated on a bench, was calmly smoking, leaving his aides to attend the first of the wounded who were brought in. A large number of Germans were among them. The rapidity with which their advance posts had been attacked and driven back left a great many of their wounded within the ground held by the French. They lay stoically, looking forward, as if awaiting the return of their own forces, after recovering from the suddenness of the shock.

But the French held the advantage they had gained. Messengers arrived in quick succession with the news of the battle. A Wurtemberg regiment had been almost annihilated by the 113th of the Line. All who were not killed or wounded had been taken prisoners. Lines of prisoners already began to file past. In the midst of the din and roar of battle, and where the artillery poured in its hottest fire, a general, spare and slim, with snow-white hair, arrived, surrounded by his staff, and with an angry gesture proceeded to rally the retreating troops.

He then disappeared through the trees, as suddenly as he came. Rameau, having arranged his ambulance ser-

vice, remained near the scene of battle. He stood motionless, his ears filled with the hoarse roar of the cannon in the distance. Impelled by anxiety to know how the affair was going, he pressed forward and ascended the slope in front of him. Suddenly a view of the battleground met his eye, and he stood and gazed on the scene.

At his feet a battalion of the National Guards was lying down, sheltered by a knoll against the projectiles hurled toward the spot by the enemy. Its commander, a man of huge stature, was sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, mechanically tapping his boot with his sabre, while his horse with loose bridle was greedily browsing on the succulent branches. A few hundred yards ahead, a battery of six pieces was firing with furious rapidity at some unseen point.

The lines of the reserves stretched along the Marne, drawn up outside the demarcation line of danger. Rameau looked in vain for those episodes that painters and poets love to trace—cavalry dashes, regiments of infantry charging one another, heroic tumult, sublime slaughter, presenting an ineffaceable spectacle. But he saw nothing of these artistic representations.

From out a thick smoke, a cluster of small dark objects, resembling a swarm of flies, appeared in the far distance. He could see them climbing their way to the top of the hill. Several times they ascended, and retreated down again. He could not exactly make out what it all meant. It was the famous attack of the Zouaves on Champigny. These brave soldiers dashed to the assault of the crenated walls, and under an avalanche of cannon-fire were whirled around like leaves in a storm. A quarter of an hour afterward, having re-formed, they again started on their mortal ascent. It was this going and coming repeatedly that Rameau was unable to understand. The battle raged murderously at this spot, and the wounded began moving in crowds over the valley leading toward the Marne. A fearful din, made by the continued roar of the cannon and

the sharp crackle of the musketry, came up from every spot of that plain where, while it was impossible to discern clearly what was taking place there, a hundred and fifty thousand were engaged in deadly battle.

A hand placed on Rameau's shoulder called his attention from the terrible scene, and, turning around, he beheld Talvanne, pale and agitated.

"I have come after you," he said, excitedly.

"What is the matter? You look so troubled!" said Rameau, with an anxious look.

Talvanne, who had appeared to be in such a hurry to speak, now stopped short as if he had suddenly discovered an abyss, and continued silent.

"What has happened?" asked Rameau, now growing apprehensive at the silence of his friend.

Talvanne answered, with an embarrassed air :

"You must come. The ambulances are crowded. We will have to embark the wounded on river boats in order to get them to the city."

"Can't you give orders to do what is needed, and——"

"Your presence is necessary," interrupted Talvanne ;
"you must come."

"Well," replied Rameau, with an air of inquietude. And without saying more he descended toward the village. After a few moments he again asked :

"Is anything wrong? If so, I would much rather you would tell me."

Talvanne drew a long breath, and replied slowly :

"Well, a great many wounded Germans have been brought in to us, and among them——"

Rameau grasped his friend's arm, and exclaimed :

"Munzel?"

Talvanne made no reply, but looked downward.

"Is he dead?"

"No, but he is dangerously wounded."

Rameau hastened to the field-hospital. He reached it in a few moments, and, elbowing his way through the

throng, he rushed into the yard where the wounded were lying on straw mattresses, the inside of the building being crowded.

"Where is he?" he asked, as if any of those around him knew the subject of his anxiety. Talvanne, whom he left behind, now arrived. He took his friend by the arm, and, leading him to a little outhouse that was used to shelter the watchman of the factory, he opened the door and murmured :

"There it is."

Rameau advanced and halted near the threshold, overcome by the horror of the scene before his eyes. Within a space of a few square yards ten men were stretched, maimed and blood-stained, moaning piteously. The blood had soaked through the straw and flowed along the floor in dark, coagulating streams. It was officers who had been taken into this shelter, under the guard of a Prussian corporal who was wounded by a bullet in the jaw, and who, seated on a wooden block, was nursing his torn cheek in his hand.

"Munzel?" cried Rameau, addressing him excitedly.

The corporal rose, gave the military salute, and with difficulty answered :

"I do not know him. Is he a captain?"

One of the wounded men rose on his elbow, and, without speaking, pointed to a corner of the narrow room where a body, covered by a military overcoat, was stretched. Rameau nervously leaned over, lifted up the garment, and at once recognized his friend, who lay with his head thrown back, his eyes closed, and his face livid. He glanced around, and, seeing Talvanne standing near, made a sign to him to approach. Then, addressing the corporal, he said :

"Come here. Take him under the shoulders, and lift him up."

And as he could not see quite clearly, and feeling overpowered with the stuffy atmosphere, he burst open a win-

dow-pane, drew a heavy breath of fresh air, and, getting down on his knees, proceeded to examine his friend. A large, brown spot, now dried, showed through his shirt near the waist. Rameau tore it open, and discovered, to his horror, beneath the ribs, a hole from which the blood slowly oozed, made by a chassepot bullet. The missile remained in his body.

He called on Talvanne to assist him, and, laying his case of instruments on the block beside him, he took a probe and began to search for the bullet. The wound was deep, and the doctor's countenance assumed a troubled aspect. He took another and longer probe, and continued to search the terrible wound. A tremor passed through the body of the wounded man, and a sigh of pain issued from his lips.

"Can you feel the missile?" asked Talvanne, without even looking at Munzel, who now tossed on his miserable pallet.

"No, I cannot find it. The wound is a deep one. It would be impossible to extract the bullet without performing laparotomy, and nine times out of ten that operation is fatal."

"What course did the bullet take?"

"It has gone around the liver and lodged in the abdomen."

Talvanne shook his head, but asked no more questions. He comprehended the gravity of the wound, and gave Munzel up for lost. The doctor, kneeling beside his friend, looked on in despair. The eyes of the wounded man continued closed, and though the flesh quivered at the touch of the steel, it was only a nervous movement, for the brain was benumbed and unconscious.

"He does not recover consciousness and may smother," remarked Talvanne. "There must be an internal hemorrhage. You see, the wound is scarcely wet."

"Let us bleed him," said Rameau. "It is the only chance of preventing his death within an hour. If we can prolong his life until to-morrow—who knows?"

And he looked at his friend with the confidence of a man accustomed to perform miracles. Talvanne, with the submission of an assistant, tore his handkerchief into bands, compressed the arm, and, handing a lance to Rameau, said:

“Do it yourself; let him have the benefit of your usual good luck.”

After a while, a sigh of relief escaped from the wounded man, his eyelids twitched, and his eyes opened. This look, vague at first, wandered over the white walls of the building, and on the pallets where his suffering companions lay. A shadow seemed to pass over his countenance. Consciousness returned to him; he began to understand how he came to be there, stretched helpless, and burning with intense agony. The fresh air from the window revived him, and his ears were filled by the terrific roar of the artillery. He attempted to rise, and was assisted by a pair of friendly hands. He looked upward, and, leaning over him, as when sick long ago, he recognized the anxious face of Rameau. His face grew livid, his features contracted, and he trembled visibly.

“Frantz!” cried the doctor, overcome with emotion. “My poor friend, I am sorry to see you thus.”

At these words, flowing from the heart of him by whom he had been so sincerely loved, the wounded man uttered a sigh, his eyes expressed an intense anguish, he clasped his hands, as if in supplication, and, in a feeble voice, murmured:

“Rameau! Heaven had ordained, then, that I should not die without seeing you once more.”

“Come, I will try to save you,” answered the doctor, placing his trembling hands on his friend’s head. “Yes, you will live!”

Munzel smiled faintly, and replied in a low voice:

“Now that you have seen me, it would be a misfortune.”

He fainted away again, and a purple color tinged his cheeks. Rameau approached him once more, and said to Talvanne:

"He breathes. We must remove him to your place. He will be better off there. We have no litter to carry him. Let us take my carriage. We can walk."

They were no longer alone in the little room. An assistant-surgeon, followed by two attendants, passed along the line of wounded. Mingled oaths and groans rose from every side, while the rattle of knives explained the tortures these unfortunates were suffering. Amputated limbs were thrown out the door, filling with horror those who were brought in. In the yard, French and Germans were heaped pell-mell, and their numbers were constantly increasing. And the crowded, yellow omnibuses, on whose sides were painted in large letters the words "Madeleine-Bastille," with wrecks of the slaughter, moved toward the Marne.

"We are going to make way for you," said Rameau, addressing the assistant-surgeon. "Give me two men to remove this wounded officer."

"Two men, my dear sir! But where am I to get them? Our litter-carriers are engaged in binding up the wounded. We are completely overwhelmed. But are you about to go away?"

"Come, Talvanne," said the doctor, without awaiting a reply, "let us do it ourselves."

And, one taking hold of Munzel by the legs, and the other under the arms, they started. About a hundred yards ahead, under a clump of trees, Rameau's carriage, bearing an ambulance flag, was awaiting them. They laid the still unconscious man on the cushions.

"Get up beside the driver, and hasten to Vincennes. Do not leave him for a moment. My place is here. There is too much need of me to think of going now."

He shook Talvanne's hand warmly, saying:

"I depend on you; do what is necessary. And if anything happens, send for me without delay. It is not likely that I can leave here before evening. But duty before all things."

"Do not be uneasy," replied Talvanne; "everything possible will be done. But hurry back to your work."

The carriage started, and Rameau, deeply grieved, returned to his post of duty. In the evening, when darkness had separated the two contending armies, a little order was established in the ambulance service. The French troops camped on the ground won from the Germans, and their fires covered the hills that the besiegers had occupied the night before. An icy wind shook the tall poplars on the banks of the Marne, and the wagons, laden with munitions, rolled noisily over the hardened soil. A great movement of troops was going on, and everything indicated that the sortie, so auspiciously begun, would be pushed to its conclusion on the following day.

Leaving his ambulances almost entirely emptied, Rameau hastened to Vincennes on foot, in the midst of the patrols, convoys, and commissariat trains. On reaching the bridge he had to make himself known, as no one was allowed to go to the rear. A regiment of those raw mobiles that the older generals treated with such contempt, and who had valiantly vindicated their worth, was camped on both sides of the road. On the other side of the river, sailors from the forts were putting in place pieces of heavy artillery intended to shell the heights occupied by the enemy. Engineers were on a raft examining with attention a rising of the water that threatened to sweep away the bridges of boats thrown across near Nogent.

Rameau, feverish and fatigued, trembled with the cold. He hastened his steps in the direction of Talvanne's asylum. He reached Joinville, and through the trees in the park, discerned the lights in his friend's dwelling. The entrance gates were open, and his unhitched carriage was standing in the centre of the yard. He mounted the steps, and crossing the vestibule entered Talvanne's office without rapping. On seeing him, a woman quickly rose, and Rameau recognized Conchita. She remained standing before him, silent, and with such a troubled look, that Rameau, thinking of Munzel only, cried out :

"Am I too late?"

"No," she replied in a sad tone. "I was at the hospital when they brought him in. He was then unconscious, but soon revived."

At the same moment Talvanne appeared.

"Ah! it is you, at last. He has asked for you twice already."

Talvanne and Conchita exchanged looks. The young woman smiled bitterly, and in a low voice said:

"It is you he wishes to see. No one else but you."

"Where is he?"

The two physicians went out, leaving Conchita alone in the room. If Rameau had looked closely in his wife's face, he would have been surprised at the change it had undergone. But his thoughts were only of the wounded man. At the end of a corridor, Talvanne opened a door, and making the doctor pass on before him, said:

"There."

"Ah! you have installed him in your own room," exclaimed Rameau feelingly. "How good you are, Talvanne!"

He pressed his friend's hand so affectionately that the latter could scarce restrain his tears. Munzel lay under the bed-curtains, which had been raised to let the air circulate more freely. His face looked like wax in the light of the lamp. His eyes were open. His mouth was drawn in a forced smile, and he feebly moved his head on the pillow.

"Do not stir," said Rameau, taking hold of his wrist, which he found to be quite cold. His pulse beat slowly. He raised the covers, opened the shirt, examined the wound, and found it inflamed and swollen.

The doctor dressed the wound again, and sat down at the foot of the bed with a tranquil air. Munzel did not lose sight of him, trying to divine an assurance of recovery or a sentence of death in the face of him whom he believed to be infallible in his profession.

"You are getting quite well," said Rameau, "but you suffer a great deal; I must try to ease your pain."

He arose, and approaching Talvanne, who was standing beside the fireplace, said to him in a low voice, with chilling calmness :

"He is gone. Peritonitis has set in ; he will not last twelve hours. I will put him to sleep with morphine."

And as Talvanne lowered his look, the doctor added :

"Disguise your feelings ; he is observing us. Let us at least spare him mental anguish. Go and bring everything needed."

Talvanne went out, gave instructions to one of his assistants, and went back to the cabinet to see Conchita.

"Well?" she asked, abruptly rising, and looking into the face of her husband's friend with searching glance ; "do not conceal anything from me, I beg of you."

"Well, the doctor thinks there is no hope."

Conchita clasped her hands convulsively, completely overcome. She and Talvanne remained motionless, in the middle of the room, overwhelmed as if the whole future had been precipitated on them in an instant. Conchita first recovered her presence of mind, and in a heart-rending voice, careless of being heard, forgetful of everything but her trouble, said :

"Oh ! I wish to see him. I do not want him to die without speaking to him."

"Your husband is with him."

"What matters it? I wish to see him."

"You are losing your senses." He looked in her face sternly, and continued : "You know, besides, that he himself, a while ago, would not allow me to let you enter his room."

"But he did not know he was going to die !"

"He does not know it yet, and he will not know it. The doctor wishes that he shall pass from life to death without any physical suffering, without any mental pain. He will sink to sleep, believing that he will wake up again."

"And then, the salvation of his soul?" exclaimed Conchita, with distraction. "No consolation, no word of hope,

no priest? It is my husband who is responsible for that, is it not? Ah! let him be an atheist on his own account, but not in regard to others. It is monstrous to act in such a manner. But he has not the right to effect the damnation of that unfortunate soul. I do not wish him to do it. No, no; it shall not be!"

"Go, then, and tell it to himself," replied Talvanne gravely.

She made a gesture of resolute determination, and said: "I will go."

"Be careful!"

"Do you believe anything can stop me?"

And she started down the corridor. He followed her, terrified at the storm he foresaw. A little salon intervened between the chamber where the dying man lay. She stopped there breathless, and waited, standing before the door. In the adjoining room the steps of Rameau and the tinkling of the vials could be heard. A tremor of impatience passed through her.

"What is he giving him?" she whispered. "He is about to stupefy his reason, to benumb his conscience. I must speak to him,—I must!"

She reached forward her hand, when the door opened and Rameau appeared. Talvanne glided in to the wounded man's pillow, leaving the husband and wife together.

"Well?" she questioned.

Rameau, with sorrowing look, and in a broken voice, answered:

"He is going to sleep."

"To sleep," cried Conchita, "that is to die?"

"Yes, since human science is powerless to save him."

"And that is the science of which you are so proud!" exclaimed Conchita with asperity. "It does not even afford you the means of saving a dear friend. And it is to such incapacity, to such infirmity, that you have erected an altar on the ruins of all belief. Ah! ah! to die! Any one can let a man die. God alone can make him live!"

Rameau, with gloomy brow, listened without making any reply.

Conchita continued :

"Have you told your friend that he must implore God to save him? Did you tell him that his life was in danger and that it was time he should make preparation for the salvation of his soul? Did you offer to bring a priest to his bedside? He is a Christian, a believer. Have you thought of all that?"

"Yes," replied Rameau in a deliberate, firm voice.

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I am going to let him pass out of life peacefully."

"That is what Talvanne has told me. But have you any right to act thus?"

"I take it."

"You will be the cause of his damnation."

"If Munzel appears before a supreme judge, he will not have to fear his anger. He has lived the life of a good man, and he can depart in peace."

At these words Conchita trembled with angry emotion, the horror of the criminal recollection being visible in her eyes.

"What do you know about it?" she replied.

He looked at her with astonishment, but she continued :

"Did he confess it all to you? Have you been informed of the circumstances connected with the latter part of his life? You are bold to affirm, as usual."

He knit his brow, and seemed to be taken with a sudden anxiety.

"Did he have the confidence to tell you what he would have concealed from me?"

"It is not a question of what he could reveal or conceal, to us or to others," she answered resolutely, "but of what he might wish to confess in his last moments. Ah! I know that to you, free-thinker as you are, these practices are ridiculous. But for us Christians, they are capital and decisive. Reject the succor of religion for yourself, if you

are so deceived, in the supreme hour, but do not deprive, by your own authority, one of your fellow-men of that which will sweeten the close of his life, render the pathway of death easy, and secure to him the entrance into eternal happiness. You are not the master of another's conscience, you cannot substitute your will for his own, and in lending yourself to such a moral tyranny, you commit a crime, and a monstrous crime at that."

"Let it be so ; I accept the responsibility of it. If your God exists, let him punish me and absolve my friend."

"Your blasphemy is shocking," cried Conchita, "when death is so close to you."

"Death," replied Rameau with profound sadness. "Yes, that is what fills even the stoutest hearts with terror. And yet, is it not the end of all our miseries? Ah ! poor friend, you are writhing with pain and racked with agony. I am told that I ought to double your cruel physical torture by the addition of a horrible moral anguish. Now that you desire the cessation of your suffering, I am asked to prolong it to your last breath. But rest easy, I will not consent to do it. You are about to sink to sleep, dear friend, and it will be for you the beginning of repose. I will have compassion for your suffering, and instead of prolonging it, I will make it end in ecstasy. I do not know what is reserved for you beyond the grave, but I will at least procure you all the comfort I can on this side of it. I do not wish to read the terror of the unknown in your eyes. You are about to sleep, and when you awaken, if awaken you will, you will then understand how much I loved you !"

At this moment Rameau appeared transfigured to the eyes of Conchita. The fervor of his friendship shone resplendent on his face. There was in his look the radiance of a faith almost divine. He was ready to endure any punishment for his dying friend. His tenderness lent him a moral strength that no power could overcome. He was certain that he acted for the best. Armed with such a conviction, such a man could not be conquered.

He advanced a step toward the wounded man's chamber, but Conchita flung herself before him. If he was determined, she was transported ; their respective convictions were about to clash at the last moment. She understood that he had successfully resisted her and that her cause was lost. Her dark eyes flashed, angry and menacing, and seizing her husband's arm, she said :

"Listen to me seriously. What is now taking place between you and me is more important than you can imagine. It is not a question of the caprice of a woman impelled by an extravagant faith. Understand me well : the man who is about to die must not surrender his soul to God without first being absolved of his sins. He must repent."

"Of what is he guilty ? Do you know ?"

"Yes, I do !"

"And how ?"

"That does not concern you. But I know it !"

"Then tell it to me in confidence."

She gazed in his face, terror-stricken.

"To you ?"

"Yes. I shall weigh the matter in my conscience, and see if the offence deserves the terrible chastisement of the agony you would inflict on the unfortunate man. And if it does, I promise that you will have satisfaction. Come, speak out."

Conchita's lips trembled. Pressed between her solicitude for her own safety and her anxiety for the salvation of Munzel, she was on the point of confessing all to her husband. A deadly pallor overspread her cheeks, her eyes swam, as if she was about to faint. She lost all consciousness of the real. Overcome by a hallucination, she saw nothing around her but a funereal darkness, lit up here and there by tongues of flame that seemed to her the fires of hell. The voices of the demons seemed to ring in her ears, "Do not speak," answered by the chant of the celestial choirs : "Sacrifice yourself so that he may be saved."

Carried away by this transport of feeling, she murmured :
“ Well, since you wish——”

But the sentiment of self-preservation returned to her, and the horror of confession restrained her. She saw clearly once more ; she found herself alone with her husband, who gazed at her in astonishment, and she nervously continued :

“ Are you a priest to hear a confession ? ”

Rameau smiled sadly and said :

“ I have nothing to hear, because you have nothing to reveal to me. You are simply carried away by your exaggerated zeal. Do not weary me any longer, and do not torment yourself as you are doing. Your faith leads you to excessive agitation, and you are unnerved by the trouble that weighs on us a I can understand it, and I excuse you as much as I commiserate you. Calm yourself, and leave me to my painful duty.”

Conchita made no reply. She laughed nervously. Then raising her hand, as if to call heaven to witness, she said :

“ Then you do not wish to do what I ask of you ? You refuse me that favor ? ”

“ Yes, because I am more certain of the humanity, in the name of which I act, than you are of the divinity in the name of which you speak.”

“ Be careful ; you wound me in the tenderest feelings of my soul.”

“ When you shall have reflected on it, you will pardon me.”

She cried out angrily :

“ Never.”

He replied coldly :

“ Well, let it be so.”

And as a heavy sigh came from the adjoining room, he said :

“ Excuse me, I must go to my patient ; that is the most important thing now.” He opened the door, and passing by his wife, who stood motionless, he disappeared. She

remained where she stood a moment, dazed, crushed, and then falling on her knees, she exclaimed in an accent of supreme invocation :

“Oh, Almighty and eternal God, have mercy on him and forgive me, I beseech Thee !”

And she remained, her head buried in her hands, deaf to all that passed around her, indifferent to everything but her prayer. Hours passed away, darkness gathered around, the silence was unbroken, and there she remained kneeling before the door of the room where the dying man lay.

She afterward remembered vaguely that her husband came out of the room for an instant, and made her take a seat, encouraging her to banish her anxiety, and that Talvanne had remained with her a long time, without speaking a word, respecting her feelings, and regarding her with compassionate gaze. She had only a sort of hazy recollection of all that followed her terrible struggle with her husband. It was like a hideous dream, full of pain and anguish. She remained still, her thoughts alternating from hope to despair. What severe expiation of her former offence !

But when she had recovered a little of her mental strength, and began to think more calmly, she no longer doubted. In face of the terrible mystery, the dark gulf into which he for whom she wept was about to disappear, there was no weakening of her faith, none of the terrors of uncertainty. She found in her meditation a new assurance, and she conceived a firmer hope that all those who have confessed and repented of their sins before dying would find life eternal. This idea sustained her, on seeing him whom she was about to lose expire in a state of grace. Then bending her head in all the depth of her humility, she implored the divine clemency with all her soul, and sought by continued prayer to obtain forgiveness for the guilty one.

About two o'clock in the morning, she felt a hand gently placed on her shoulder. She looked up and beheld Talvanne, pale, grave, standing by her. She questioned him with a glance. He said nothing. She then gasped :

"Is it all over?"

"Yes, it is all over."

"Without pain?"

"Without pain."

"Without knowing he was going to die?"

"Without knowing it."

She paused an instant, and then asked in a low tone :

"What were his last words?"

"He was in a state of semi-unconsciousness ; he slowly revived, and looking at your husband, who was about administering to him a soothing potion, he smiled as if feeling a great relief, and murmuring, 'How good you are !' expired."

She replied with evident grief :

"So his last word was for him !" She walked toward the room and entered. Rameau was sitting beside the bed, and turning to her, pointed to Munzel's body, which was ghastly pale, as if all his blood had escaped from his fatal wound. He passed in silence into the adjoining room. She fell on her knees, and prayed fervently, and then taking from her neck a little golden cross, and joining Munzel's hands, placed the sacred emblem between the fingers, and turning to Talvanne said :

"Promise me that you will bury him thus."

"It shall be done."

She then grew weak, and leaning on the arm of her faithful friend, burst into tears. She remained for some moments in silent sorrow. Recovering her strength, she said :

"You think I weep for him. You are mistaken. He is now at peace ; he is happy. The tears I shed are for myself."

And as Talvanne looked at her with bewilderment, she continued :

"I know what I am saying. I, a Christian, consented to marry an atheist, and deserved to suffer for it. See how every one who has come in contact with that man has been stricken. My mother has been taken away from me ; you

remember what I told you beside her death-bed. Now, Munzel's turn has come. I shall go next. Talvanne, that man diffuses a moral poison around him. Be careful for yourself."

And rising, with the gesture and voice of a prophetess, she repeated :

"It is I who shall go next."

And looking tearfully at Talvanne, who scarce knew what to say, she added :

"I want you to promise that when I shall be no more, you will not neglect my daughter, that you will love her, and bring her up a good Christian."

"Her father is a good man," replied Talvanne ; "he will be sure to respect your will. But there is no danger of your dying, and it will be yourself probably that will close our eyes in death."

"But," she insisted, "I want you to promise, otherwise I shall not be contented."

"Well, if it is necessary to your ease of mind I certainly promise what you desire."

She uttered a sigh of relief, and once more kneeling beside the bed engaged in prayer.

[CHAPTER VII.

LOSS AND GAIN.

"WELL, how is the little one getting on?"

"Oh! a great deal better, mademoiselle, thanks to the care of your good father, whom heaven preserve for us, poor people. See how the operation has succeeded."

The woman who spoke, tall, thin and pale, and clad in deep black, removed the bandage that covered the face of the child she carried in her arms, showing a pair of eyes still red and sore, but sound in their azure limpidity.

"When I think," she continued, "that but for him it

would have been blind!—a poor little creature that, like its father, must work all its days for a living. What would have become of it but for the doctor? And so, mademoiselle, I pray to God, night and morning, to bless you and grant you happiness.”

“Oh! rather pray to Him to preserve papa’s health.”

The young girl patted the cheek of the child with her dainty white hand, softly replaced the bandage, and with a pleasant smile took leave of the mother at the door. An old man came out now from the doctor’s office, decrepit, with an uneasy air, scanning a piece of paper on which a few hieroglyphic lines were traced.

“Is that your prescription?” asked the young girl.

“Yes, mademoiselle,” replied the old man. “He has prescribed a great many things for me to-day. Treatment for the rich, but not for poor, starving people like me.”

“But you will get an order on the druggist.”

“The druggists receive us very badly, if it is a charity order,” insinuated the old man; “it would be much better for me if you would be kind enough to give me the money instead.”

“Yes, to go and drink it,” exclaimed an old lady with white hair and rubicund face, and the dress of a governess, who emerged suddenly from an adjoining room. “I know you, Père Gillet, and you can’t palm off any of your stories on me. The other week you fooled mademoiselle into giving you ten francs, and that same evening you were brought home dead drunk. That is a nice way to cure your cough.”

“If one could say——” began the old man.

“Yes; it is enough to disgust people in helping their needy fellow-men. To be sure, we do it on our own account and not theirs. Otherwise——”

“Rosalie!” interrupted the young girl.

“Pshaw, Adrienne, I know what I say. Here, Père Gillet, here is your order. Come again, if you want to see the doctor.”

She led the old man toward the door. As he left he saluted the young girl with an humble and disappointed air, and as he passed through the corridor, the trailing of his clogs could be heard on the flagstones.

Adrienne and Rosalie remained in the parlor, panelled with oak, around which benches ran, worn smooth by the numbers of the unfortunate and sick, who came there two days in the week for free consultation and treatment by Dr. Rameau. The rays of the vernal sun poured in, like golden beams, through the window that opened on the garden. The perfumes of blooming lilacs rose sweet and penetrating, and the birds carolled merrily in the trees and flitted about amid the branches. An intoxicating sense of pleasure emanated from everything around, and the two women remained absorbed by the softness of the air and the brightness of the sun, drinking in the joyance of existence.

They were recalled from their reverie by the noise of the opening door, and the entrance of an old man, with a long overcoat and a huge hat, from under which hung long, white hair, framing a fresh and smiling countenance.

"Ah! my godfather," joyously exclaimed Adrienne, rushing to meet him.

Doctor Talvanne, for it was he, placed his hands on the young girl's shoulders, looked in her face tenderly, admired her rosy cheeks and blue eyes and golden hair, and said:

"How are you, my dear, this morning?"

"Just as I am always."

"Oh! a doctor's daughter is never ill. Any one can see how your papa takes care of you. Is he in?"

"Yes. The free consultation hours are just over. Papa is in his office with Monsieur Servant."

"Good! I will take Robert's place, and send him out to you. Will you like that?"

"Why, yes, of course."

Talvanne passed on and entered Rameau's private office.

Seated before a large desk covered with papers, books, and vials containing liquids of all colors, the doctor was dictating notes to his pupil, who was bent over a table beside the window.

Robert Servant, now twenty-eight years of age, was a handsome young man, of a calm and serious air, with dark features, black eyes, curling hair, and mustache. As to Rameau, it would have been difficult to recognize in him the man of the huge, athletic physique and lion-like head of former years, who impressed one so keenly by the bold hauteur of his looks and countenance. His large brow, now growing bare, was continually marked with the famous wrinkle, but it no longer indicated preoccupation or anger; it was now the marked effect of suffering and sadness. The shaggy hair, which formerly floated like a mane, was now grown white and thin. His body, worn and emaciated, was bent over as he sat in his chair. His eyes alone, which still sparkled with the fires of genius, had not changed.

He extended his nervous hand to Talvanne, and with a nod of the head indicated to his pupil that their business was finished. The young man rose silently, folded his papers, and passed out. The two friends remained together.

Sixteen years had gone by since the disasters of the war, and, as if the spring of Rameau's happy destiny had been broken in that mournful year, sadness and misfortune had never since then been absent from his hearth. After having languished, wasted by an unknown malady, despite the care which her husband lavished on her, despite her resistance and struggle, for she dreaded death, Conchita had gone to rejoin her mother. And Rameau, prostrated like an oak under the woodman's axe, had remained for several months a prey to an incurable misanthropy.

Shut up in his house, scarcely ever going out of his office, retired even from the sight of the servants, attended to only by the faithful Rosalie, he lived with his daughter and Talvanne, mourning for his dead wife and cursing the science that had betrayed him. Never before did his

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Shut up in his house, scarcely ever going out of his office, retired even from the sight of the servants, attended to only by the faithful Rosalie, he lived with his daughter and Talvanne, mourning for his dead wife and cursing the science that had betrayed him. Never before did his

materialism appear more violent than during these first months of his mental affliction. He did not bend under the weight that crushed him ; he rebelled, and his pessimism overflowed in all its bitterness. He attributed to nature the misfortune that had befallen him ; he held mankind, himself included, responsible for it. He did not accuse God, for he did not believe in His existence.

Talvanne, with angelic mildness, listened to these furious imprecations of his friend, bore his intolerant attacks, and endured his periods of silence, often prolonged for weeks at a time. He remained with him continually, indulgent as a brother and patient as a woman. He neglected, for his sake, the duties of his profession. When remonstrated with, he brusquely answered :

“The first duty of a friend is to take care of his friend. As long as Rameau will need my presence, the rest of humanity will have no existence for me.”

And the doctor rewarded him for his devotedness by treating him with the utmost harshness. Not even in their youth, when his temper used to burst forth like a volcano, did he ever abuse him with such violence. And what the student with the blonde hair and smooth brow endured with difficulty, and often not without resentment, the member of the Medical Academy with the wrinkled forehead and whitened head now received without answer or murmur.

He felt that these furious ebullitions eased the sore heart of his friend. When the torrent of anger had rolled for an hour, calm followed, and, as if ashamed of these transports of fury, Rameau sought to atone for them by the delicacy of his thoughts, and the charm of his expressions, in which all the radiant grandeur of his mind shone forth. He seemed to apologize by his change of manner, and to make amends to his friend for the harshness he had exhibited, by the soothing symphony of his speech. Then it would resemble a beautiful summer evening after a storm, when the placid sky is blue and serene, the at-

mosphere filled with a purer freshness, and the grass washed by the rains is of a brighter green.

The good Talvanne greatly rejoiced at these changes, the value of which he thoroughly understood, and they gave him courage to endure future outbursts of violence. When Rameau's temper became wholly uncontrollable, Talvanne had recourse to a supreme and irresistible expedient: he brought little Adrienne into the doctor's room. In presence of the pure and innocent face of his little daughter the dark anger of the father would melt into ecstasy. Immediately the harsh voice was subdued, the flashing eyes were lit by rays of tenderness only, and the sardonic lips took on a gracious smile. All anger and chagrin disappeared with an embrace and a kiss.

The little girl was four years of age, and skipping around the large room, in the midst of the books, papers, and office paraphernalia, she lent to this gloomy chamber the gaiety of a lark. Without her, her father would not have been able to endure his suffering. She attached him to life once more, but she had not been able to fill up the void that death had made in his heart. This man, whose existence had been so bound up with thought, now felt his mind weak and spiritless. He who had worked so vigorously and with such pleasure, was now disgusted with all labor.

He spent whole days seated in his chair, no longer before his desk seeking the solution of some scientific problem, but beside his window, gazing at the fleeting clouds in the vast expanse of sky that overspreads the Place des Invalides, or following the evolutions of the soldiers going through their daily drill. When night came, he rose, and seated himself by the corner of the fireplace, silent and lost in thought.

Thinking of what? Talvanne knew, but was careful to abstain from touching on the subject lest he should provoke an outburst of anger. The husband dreamed continually of the young wife, and cursed the fate that had taken her

from him. When he spoke, impelled by the desire to give vent to his feelings, it was always the same recriminations: Why should that woman, beautiful, vigorous, happy, useful, only in her twenty-eighth year, be snatched away by death, when so many unfortunate, old, and decrepit persons, without friends or love of life, still be left to continue their miserable existence? What an atrocious injustice is this law of being, that dooms youth and beauty and spares decrepitude and senility!

"Explain that, you imbecile," he would shout at Talvanne, "with your admirable order of nature, your final causes and divine will. Give me an acceptable solution of this infamous and monstrous problem: the young dying before the old, weakness triumphing over strength. Is that just? And if there is a God that permits such iniquity, what do you think of such a God?"

Generally Talvanne would make no reply, but hang his head as if vanquished. But Rameau sometimes became so pale from his pent-up anger that his friend purposely engaged in a controversy, to give him an opportunity to pour out the flood of his fury.

"Alas!" he would say mildly, "life is such a brief trial that it counts for little with God. Meantime this trial is so rude, that those whom He calls to Himself should be considered specially favored. You know well that all religions, with paganism at the head, have regarded death as a heavenly favor. And those who survived the dear departed were consoled by the assurance that they would one day meet again."

"Yes! in the vague Elysian Fields, in a paradise, the very location of which is undetermined. Ah! ah! blindness and imposture!" Rameau would exclaim. "And under what appearance will they see one another again? Human appearance? You know well that nothing of this body will remain after it rots in the tomb. Shall they meet as ghosts? Horrible!—better never meet at all. In vain do you ministers of religion lie; that exquisite

form that I so tenderly adored, so radiant and beautiful, I shall never more see. That smile which charmed, and which shone with the joy of life, will beam on me no more. Those eyes, so soft and brilliant and tender, will never again thrill me with their looks. The loss I have suffered is irreparable. Pshaw ! you may talk to me of the promises of your religion, but I have the misfortune of not believing in it. The body of her who rendered me happy has been taken from me, the living bond that united her to me has been broken, and we are separated to meet no more."

He would then yield to an irresistible despondency, which made this man of powerful and vigorous physique as weak and irresolute as a child. Talvanne, grieved at this spectacle of physical and moral prostration, would remain silent ; and then when the access of feeling was over, he would seize his friend's hand, expressing by his kindly grasp, all the compassion and tenderness of his heart.

"You see," Rameau would say, with a melancholy smile, "you have to deal with the most incurable of maniacs in me. Measure my head, feel it, examine it. It will be of use to you, who still believe in science and religion."

Silence would then follow, and the day or evening would pass without further incident.

During this period Rameau received no patients, made no visits, and offered his resignation in the Sorbonne and Academy. The Faculty gave him an indefinite vacation, but his patients were not so considerate. Despite the rigorous orders to the servants, parents, excited by the fear of losing their children, found means of gaining access to his rooms. He repelled them rudely, expressing with cynicism his implacable indifference for his fellow-men.

"You wish me to save your wife?" he would say. "I have not been able to save my own. You have confidence in my diagnosis, in my experience. That is more than I can say myself. To-day I would not prescribe for my dog, if

it were sick, so little faith have I in the efficacy of science. Go home ; there is no virtue in medicine. Consult a charlatan, or do nothing. Both amount to the same thing. But let me have peace. How do your misery, your trouble, your suffering, concern me ? Let the world come to an end for all I care. The loss would not be as great as people imagine."

The rumor spread that his mind was unhinged since the death of his wife. And it was not far from the truth.

This strange change that came over Rameau often alarmed Talvanne, who had had a long experience in the treatment of mental diseases, and he was obliged to admit that more than one of the inmates of his institution did not exhibit such oddity as his friend. The profound repugnance that Rameau experienced for everything that in any way related to a profession to which he had devoted his life, was a serious symptom. The alienist saw months go by without the doctor manifesting the least curiosity concerning what was passing in the scientific world. He who formerly read with avidity the treatises, articles, and theses published in Europe and America—everything, in short, that related to medicine—did not even break the wrapper of the *Gazette Medicale*, purposely placed under his eyes by Talvanne.

Frequently, in the endeavor to elicit a spark of that fire that now seemed extinguished the alienist described recent operations that had been performed at the Ecole, and the experiments made at the Laboratory of Chemistry. He scanned Rameau's face ; he marked its impassibility, as if he had not comprehended what he had heard. He did comprehend, however ; for one day, as Talvanne was talking, as usual, apropos of a new treatment for cancer commended by the professors of Berlin, he shrugged his shoulders and contemptuously exclaimed :

"Asses ! all asses ! If they had employed subcutaneous phenic injections they would have had a greater chance of success."

"You think so?" replied Talvanne, earnestly, trying to spur him into conversation.

But Rameau, with a contemptuous smile, said :

"Don't you see, I am only ridiculing them."

And it was impossible to elicit another word from him. Talvanne began to ask himself if cerebral anæmia had not deprived Rameau of the faculty of thought, when an unexpected event restored the great man to his former self. Madame Servant was taken ill, and her condition soon grew very serious. Talvanne informed Rameau of the circumstance. He said to him :

"I come from Madame Servant's ; she is worse than she was yesterday. Richardet, who is attending her, visits her twice a day. He prescribes such and such things, but without any result."

On hearing of her illness Rameau simply exclaimed, "Ah, I am sorry !" and every time that his friend spoke to him of the woman to whom he had shown all the gratitude that he owed his old patron, he shook his head sadly. One evening Talvanne said to him :

"What would you prescribe in such a case, doctor?"

Rameau smiled sardonically and answered :

"How do I know? And, besides, what good would it be?"

As his friend insisted he silenced him rudely :

"Stop, you weary me."

He rose, paced the room nervously, as if to banish the emotion that he could not conceal, and in a few moments resumed his seat, and remained in silent contemplation. The following day Talvanne entered his friend's office visibly excited, and, without sitting down, informed him that Madame Servant was considered beyond recovery at a consultation held during the afternoon. The physicians knew not what to do ; they had virtually given her up.

"As if they could do anything else," sneered Rameau, without raising his head.

This obstinate refusal to take any interest in a case that

appealed to him so strongly irritated Talvanne. He lost all patience and exclaimed :

“Surely you cannot be insensible to what I have just told you ! It is a question of the death or recovery of the woman whose son you have adopted. She bears the name of your old patron, of the man who made you what you are—for, without him, what would you have been ?”

“Perhaps a happy man.”

“Rameau,” replied Talvanne, “you have suffered, you suffer now, and you will suffer more—that is the lot of all men. But are you going to hold the innocent responsible for your affliction ? Do you wish to make your fellow-men share the misfortune that has overtaken yourself ? Will the sight of others’ sufferings alleviate your own ? I have always known you to be generous and brave. Are you now grown selfish and cowardly ? Do you understand me ? What can I say in order to reach your heart ? A woman is dying, and by saving her you can pay back a sacred debt. Will you do it ?”

Rameau looked up, the tears welled to his eyes, and his pale face flushed. He rose, straightened up his drooping shoulders, and in a voice that recalled his old-time energy replied :

“You are right, Talvanne ; pardon me for my indifference ; I will go with you.”

“Ah, you are yourself again !” exclaimed Talvanne in a transport of joy, grasping the doctor by the hand. “Come, come with me now.”

And without giving time to reflect, encouraging him by his fervent words, he helped him into his carriage, and conducted him to the bedside of the dying woman.

The pact that Rameau appeared to have made with death, and which the latter had but once violated, though cruelly, to be sure, seemed to be ratified once more. In three days’ time Mme. Servant was restored to life ; in saving her, Rameau had saved himself also. By this victory he recovered his love of combating pain. His taste

for work and activity returned, never to forsake him again.

He was completely transformed. One would have thought that, during his long months of torpor, he had revived and recovered all his youthful power of conception and vigor of execution. He reappeared at the *Ecole de Médecine*, and his first lecture, which had attracted an immense throng of students, was a triumph. Every one rejoiced to see this powerful intellect restored, and shine out more resplendent than ever. His old charm was unbroken, and his eloquence was still more refined. It was, perhaps, less virile than in the past, but softened by a melancholy poesy that made it more pleasing to the imagination. It sounded like an echo of his own suffering. He had known the extreme of human joy and pain, and his genius found in it its complete development.

Formerly, Rameau was admired, but dreaded in his strength and pride. Now, he was loved and venerated, on account of his incurable sorrow and unbounded gentleness. His fortune, then considerable, for he made as much money as he wished, had become a source of inconvenience to him, and he devised ways of expending it for the greatest possible good. He had founded a clinical surgery, where, in presence of his pupils, he operated on the poor. He devoted two days of the week, at his mansion in the *Rue Saint-Dominique*, to free consultations. Rameau deserved the honorable title of physician of the poor. Suffering or poverty was a sure passport to his benevolence or treatment. And what treatment! The emperors and kings had no physicians around them for a moment comparable to this magician who subdued pain, vanquished disease, and enchained death.

Talvanne had grown young again with joy. Proud of the cure that he secretly felt he had accomplished, he now aided Rameau in the organization of all his charitable labors. He managed the surgical hospital, superintended all its departments, paid the rent, the nurses; in a word,

took charge of the financial part of the institution, leaving the scientific part only to his friend.

"Owing to my experience with my asylum," he said, "I am versed in the financial question, while you, my friend, know nothing about it. Mend arms and legs, cut out tumors, hack bodies to pieces and sew them up again as well as ever—that's your business, and in it you have no rival. Each one to his forte, and everything will march smoothly."

And then the good man would rub his hands and laugh joyously.

Sometimes, in the evenings, he would take little Adrienne on his knee and say:

"Your father is a great philosopher. They will erect a statue to him some day, as grand as any raised to the greatest warriors, and he will be more deserving of it, my child, than they, for it is better to win glory in helping men to live than in compelling them to die."

But if the physical and intellectual condition of Rameau had become satisfactory, his mental condition still left much to desire. The doctor had, notwithstanding the affectionate solicitude of his friend, and the absorbing love of his daughter, many hours of dark melancholy. It was especially on the approach of the anniversary of the death of her whom he never ceased to mourn, that these sombre spells became more oppressive and menacing. On these occasions he was almost unapproachable, outside of professional exigency. On the eve of the fatal day, he would ascend to his wife's chamber, and, without opening the shutters, sit, as in the darkness of the tomb, for four-and-twenty hours, communing alone with the dead. This funereal retreat over, he would issue from the chamber, pale and bowed, with tearful eyes, but with an increased firmness and calm. And then he would resume his labors, his occupation, his usual life.

His house, which had been so hospitable, was now rigorously closed. With the exception of a few friends, no one

entered it. The Saturday receptions had ceased, the grand salon was never lighted, and the invited guests no longer ascended the stone steps of the staircase of honor. All was silent and gloomy, and two windows, that looked out on the garden, on the first floor, in the centre of the façade, remained with their curtains closely drawn, like eyes piously closed in death.

In the midst of this sadness and misanthropy, little Adrienne grew, healthy, lively, and gay, singing like a bird perched on a cypress over a tomb, and which carols, without heed of sorrow or tears, because the skies are blue and the sun smiles down on the green. Her father adored her. He enveloped her in his love, seeming to search to the bottom of that soul now beginning to awaken, as if to divine the secret of her future temperament. Would she be serious or frivolous, sedate or capricious? And, oh! above all, would she be gentle and religious, or intolerant and fanatical? Would she have the passionate and ardent soul of her mother, and, in this age of wavering faith, would she exhibit the religious fervor of past ages? Or,—and this was his dream—would she offer, first to her father, and afterward to her husband, a simple and tender heart, content to love and to be loved, without wishing to reform or proscribe?

He made it a rule never to utter before this child a single word in relation to religion—no controversy, no exposition of doctrine, but an absolute neutrality. He would have considered it a crime to introduce into this mind, open to his word and eager to listen to it, a single one of his own ideas. On this point he was scrupulously honorable.

He had Adrienne brought up like all the other little girls around her. She went, under the charge of Rosalie, to a school where religious instruction formed a part of the studies. And when the child would address certain questions to her father relating to sacred history, it was delightful to hear Rameau explain, with an exquisite simplicity, the charming story of the origin of Christianity.

He recounted everything as it had been recounted to himself, in his childhood, and he felt once more, in the depth of his recollection, the sensations he had long ago experienced. After so many years of unbelief, these impressions had still left their traces on his mind. With a dreamy philosophy, he used to say that a faith whose roots struck so deeply in the imagination, was almost indestructible. And he would gently fondle his daughter, while her dainty hands caressed his long, white beard, as he finished the recital of *The Flight into Egypt*, or the *Sleep of Jesus on the Lake of Gennesareth*.

He thus excited the admiration of Talvanne, who saw with unspeakable joy the education of the child advance, without giving rise to any difficulty. He was apprehensive, however, when the time for her first communion drew near. How would Rameau accept for his daughter this ceremony, against which he had so frequently argued, on account of the confession that was preparatory to it? The influence of the priest, holding at his mercy the moral will of a young girl or a young woman, appeared monstrous to him, and he had always, in discussing this important question of liberty of conscience, given way to accesses of anger that almost bordered on frenzy. He was intractable on that question, even when he made certain concessions in regard to others.

However he had let his daughter learn her catechism, and follow the usual course of religious instruction. When she talked to him of her religious lessons he manifested no disapproval, and it was impossible to surmise what he thought about it. To question him would be dangerous, inasmuch as it might awaken his susceptibilities, excite his prejudices, and provoke a storm. Talvanne was not bold enough to confront such difficulties, and he allowed the time to pass by, trusting to the unexpected moderation of the father, and the captivating sweetness of the daughter. He said to himself:

“If there be any quarrel, I will leave Adrienne to settle

it with him, herself. And I will wager my life that in such a dispute, the lamb will bring the tiger to reason."

However, as the solemn day drew near, it became necessary to prepare the girl's toilet. Rosalie took charge of the affair. It was an important solemnity for Adrienne. Meantime, she was filled with the deepest fervor at the thought of approaching the holy table, and overjoyed, because for the first time she was to wear a long dress.

One evening after dining, Talvanne and Rameau had retired to the doctor's cabinet to examine some curious documents received from Germany, when the door was noiselessly opened, and Adrienne, radiant with joy, entered in her communion-robe. She approached her father and godfather, walking with measured step, swinging her skirts with that instinctive coquetry of little girls who wish to play the part of young ladies.

"The dressmaker has come to try on my dress," she began, "and I wanted you to see it. It becomes me so nicely! But if you think that any changes should be made, say so."

Happiness beamed in her eyes; she looked around for a glass in which to admire herself, but there was no mirror in this quiet and gloomy chamber. Talvanne, who felt uneasy from the beginning, cast a searching glance at his friend, but found him calm and smiling. When Adrienne, with a glow of pleasure, had exclaimed, "It becomes me so nicely," a smile passed over the serious countenance of Rameau, and he replied in a pleasant tone:

"Yes, it becomes you splendidly, my child."

"Ah! so much the better," she cried, clapping her hands for joy. "I wish to be among the prettiest, papa, so that you can see me in the church, and be proud of me."

"Take care, Adrienne," said Rameau, playfully shaking a threatening finger at the girl, "you see, now you commit the sin of pride."

The child blushed. All her exuberance vanished, and she innocently replied:

"You are right, papa, but it was not vanity made me say that, but my desire to please you."

And as she spoke she went over to her father, flung her arms around his neck, kissed him lovingly, and with a pretty bow and charming smile, skipped out of the room.

As soon as the door was shut the two men engaged in a rapid interchange of ideas. Talvanne, powerless to resist the impulse of his thoughts, bent over to his friend, grasped his hand warmly, and said:

"You are a brave man!"

"Does that surprise you?" Rameau replied.

"No," answered Talvanne, earnestly. "But I feel that you have conquered yourself by an effort, in order to please that child, and I, who love her as if she were my own, cannot help thanking you for it!"

The doctor raised his head, and looking fixedly at his friend, said:

"What did you fear from me?"

"Listen," replied Talvanne, with precaution, "do not grow angry at what I am about to say, but I knew you to be so intolerant."

"Intolerant! well, let it be so if you say so," broke in the doctor, "but how could I be so with my daughter?"

He remained silent for a moment, and then in a tender voice, continued:

"To bruise that young heart now opening in its freshness, to cast a shadow on that mind so pure and tender? What a monster I should be! Oh, no! If any religion is bearable, it is that of a child who feels itself naturally attracted toward heaven. If any prayer is sacred, it is that which ascends from innocent lips. What matters it if the belief is vain, if it fortifies the heart and illumines the spirit? All prayer is good, if inspired by love and charity. At night when I enter my daughter's chamber, when she is about to go to sleep, I see her join her little hands, and I hear her murmur in her sweet voice:

"My God, grant me the grace to do nothing that would

offend my papa, and to do everything to make him happy. Grant him health and strength, as also to my dear god-father.'

"No, Talvanne, I would not wish for anything the world could give, that my child would not believe and pray. She would in that case, it seems to me, be less good, less sweet, less pure. Let us leave philosophy to men; let them debate and elucidate, but let us be careful not to rob woman of her faith. We would lose too much by it!"

And as his friend gazed at him with evident astonishment, he continued:

"Yes, I can guess your thoughts. You ask yourself how it is that I am so liberal with my daughter, after having been so authoritative with my wife, at the risk even of causing her so much pain. The reason is because the situation was entirely different. Conchita was not content to believe and pray, she wished to compel me to believe and pray as she did. Liberty for herself was not sufficient, she wished to deprive me of mine. Her proselytism was turned into oppression, and, while I never asked her to abandon her belief, she tried to compel me to renounce all my convictions. There was a struggle between us, and both my dignity as a man and my intellectual authority, compelled me to resist. But I never tried to abuse my victory. And it is to-day a consolation for me in my sorrow, that I never made an effort to weaken her zeal. I simply repelled her attacks on my independence, and I did not do it without pain. You know I was ready to make great concessions; you know, in fact, that I did. But to burn all that I had adored, was to exact from me a dishonorable surrender, and great as my love was, it could not compel me to accept such degradation. I suffered much in silence, for I did not wish any one, not even an old friend like yourself, to suspect the troubles that disturbed my peace. But the love that I bore my wife was not weakened by this suffering. I pitied her when I saw her wounded in heart on failing to triumph over my resistance. My ten-

derness toward her was redoubled, in order to make her forget, if possible, the disappointment that each of these attempts caused her. And I may furthermore add, that I would not have wished her to share my own ideas. If she had been a free-thinker, like myself, I would not have loved her; she would have seemed to me a kind of monster, all her femininity would have disappeared, and I would have turned from her with horror. Religion is necessary to woman. Faith occupies her mind, and strengthens her heart and lends a touching grace to her whole being. And if the society of the future shall know an atheistic woman, I pity those who will have for mother, wife, or daughter, that frightful product of our scientific progress. I wish Adrienne to be happy, and consequently I have done everything in my power to have her brought up in those ideas that will best assure her happiness. She will think, and see, like the majority of the good and intelligent young girls of our time. She will not be distinguished above others, save by the beauty nature has bestowed on her, and the intelligence which you and I are at such pains to develop. She will possess simplicity, uprightness, and goodness. With these qualities, let her marry a good man, and then I will go, without the least inquietude, into nothingness, as I believe, or into eternity, as she believes."

Talvanne had listened to this declaration, so singular coming from such a man, with mingled interest and emotion. He admired the deep philosophy with which Rameau, gauging the destructive influence of certain ideas on certain minds, would limit, for woman, the domain of intellectual conquest. He wished to urge him on to a more formulated conclusion, and with sarcastic bonhomie, asked:

"Why do you not wish women to be as enlightened as men? If your ideas are good, why not let them enjoy the benefit of them? I do not understand your restrictions. Good is absolute, and if it is desirable for one, it is equally so for the other. You would wish, then, to reduce woman to a sort of mental servitude? Why?"

Rameau shook his head and said :

“Because with woman all that is not useful is hurtful. There is no middle limit for her. Free thought would lead woman directly to license in morals, and from that to vice. Liberty is too great a load for her to carry. It would be necessary, in order to render her fit to enjoy it, to change all the conditions of her existence, which are those of infirmity and dependence. She would gain nothing by the change, and man would lose by it. Equality, from a social point of view, does not and cannot exist between man and woman. Let us leave her, then, to her rôle of dependence, sweetness, and grace. It is by that she triumphs. Let us not change anything in her destiny, for we would not be sure to better it.”

“Still, you must admit, there have been women who by their greatness of intellect have shown themselves worthy of the fullest liberty. For instance, not to go further back, Madame Roland in politics, Madame de Staël in literature, and later still, George Sand.”

“Ah ! you only confirm my reasoning,” broke in Rameau. “The women you mention were men. There are errors in nature, you see, and sex is sometimes improperly allotted. If these exceptions should be the rule, we would only have to paraphrase the words of the great caricaturist, and, in speaking of these superior women, say : ‘ May God preserve our sons from their daughters ! ’ ”

Talvanne laughed, and did not carry the controversy any further. He was too much in accord with his friend that evening not to be well satisfied. They remained for a time smoking and chatting by the fire, and the alienist departed for Vincennes.

A few weeks later Adrienne made her first communion. Her father and godfather accompanied her to the church. She had the honor of pronouncing publicly, on behalf of her companions, the renewal of their baptismal vows, and nothing occurred on that solemn day to mar her happiness.

She grew apace, and soon began to take part in her father's charitable work. She had been placed at the head of the wardrobe and laundry, important annexes of the private hospital. In conjunction with Rosalie, she prepared the bandages, sheets, napkins, and other articles. She was in constant communication with the large shops of Paris, in order to purchase at the lowest prices garments for the poor. She furnished clothing material for infants and grown-up children, which she sent to the Sisters' Industrial School to be made. The entire management of this department of the business devolved on her, and it was a pleasure to see how successfully she accomplished her duties.

Talvanne often came in the mornings to witness his god-child dispensing her charities. He would stand in a corner of the waiting-hall, through which the sick and the needy filed past, and look with admiration at the self-possession and smiling grace of this young girl. She was now approaching her sixteenth year, and had become a grown-up young woman. Her exquisite beauty increased with her growth, and Talvanne was not the only one to admire it.

Rameau's pupil, Robert Servant, had for a long time back changed his manner and attitude toward the friend of his boyhood. He no longer joked and laughed and played with her, as he used to do years before. He had grown reserved and grave toward her, but not less attentive. When he arrived from the charity hospital, where he was a pupil, to receive his master's orders, he always brought a pretty bouquet of flowers to Adrienne, but he no longer kissed her, as when a boy. He simply shook her hand, but the pressure of his fingers was as tender as the kiss.

He was a remarkable youth, had won his degree in all branches, and bade fair to soon gain a place in the Faculty. He acquired from Rameau a special taste for chemistry, and he had already made some interesting studies on the sub-

ject of microbes. A skilful surgeon, he nevertheless preferred medicine, whose wider field held out to his curiosity the possibility of more numerous discoveries. Being without fortune and an orphan, his mother having succumbed to the malady from which Rameau had saved her years before, he had nothing to expect from any one. But he was strong, sensible, and a hard worker. He had faith in the future, and resolutely pursued his course.

Besides, his master smoothed the way for him, for in the medical sphere he was all-powerful. Whenever he performed an operation on some rich or distinguished personage he always took Robert with him, and left him after him to dress the wounds or to watch for possible complications. These important assignments were very lucrative, and the finances of the young doctor were soon on a sound footing. He was at home at Rameau's, having been brought up in the house, so to speak. Talvanne and Rosalie regarded him as a member of the family. He lived in the shadow of the great celebrity of his master, sharing in his labor and enjoying his friendship. And his admiration for the great man to whom he owed everything was only equalled by his devotion to him. He would have sacrificed his life for him. But, perhaps, it would have been for the father of Adrienne rather than his own patron that he would have made the sacrifice.

A deep, pure, unchangeable love, one of those tender feelings of childhood which last for life, filled his heart. If he had been asked how long he had loved the young girl, he would have been puzzled for an answer. He would say: "I have always loved her. I do not remember ever to have felt my heart void of that affection. Since I first looked on her I have found her charming. It would be impossible for me to realize what life would be without her, and if fate should ordain that she should disappear, I could only follow her, for without her the world would be a desert."

Still, he had never uttered a word that could lead the

young girl to suspect that he loved her. The necessity of an avowal of his sentiments had never occurred to his mind. Why should he speak to her? Could she not understand without any formal explanations? He was sure of her already, without exacting any promise from her. He could not imagine her thinking of any other than himself. He was perfectly calm and confident, and he lived happily in that sad, sombre, and silent mansion, finding it gay, lively, and radiant, because within its walls he could hear the voice and see the smile of Adrienne.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BETROTHAL.

TALVANNE had just sat down in Rameau's office beside the glowing fire that was kept burning all the year round, even when the windows were open in the spring-time. The doctor had received his friend with a nod, and was again engaged in the reading of a report. He made a few pencil notes on the margin, and then, thrusting the papers aside, he wheeled his chair about, looked at the clock, and said :

"Noon already !"

"Yes ; and how many patients have you seen ?"

"About a dozen. I must dress before dinner, for there is an examination to-day at the École. Ring the bell, please."

Talvanne touched the electric button that was within arm's reach of him, and, as if everything that Rameau desired was anticipated and arranged in advance, Rosalie entered bearing on her arms a coat, a vest, and a cravat. The doctor would have no one but the old servant and friend for his wife attend to his personal wants. She was used to wait on him, knew his habits and eccentricities, an-

anticipated his wants, and would enter his office and interrupt him while at work to remind him that he was forgetting himself; that he had such and such a thing to do at a certain hour, and that it was time for him to be up and going. At ordinary times she was silent, understanding at a sign what was wanted, and answering briefly. For these reasons Rameau desired to be waited on by her and no other.

She placed the clothes on a chair, opened a credence-shaped piece of furniture containing a toilet, and, without saying a word, prepared everything that her master needed. When all was done she went out as silently as she came.

The doctor, in his shirt-sleeves, was washing his hands. Talvanne went over to the window, and, resting his elbow on the sill, looked out into the garden. Robert and Adrienne were promenading slowly side by side along the border of the grassy lawn in delicious enjoyment. They were chatting as they walked, and though their words did not reach his ear, Talvanne could easily see by the gaiety of their smile and the vivacity of their looks that they were happy in each other's company. The time passed by quickly and joyously for them amid the balmy thickets, vocal with the song of the flitting birds. Talvanne's eye followed them on their walk, and, divining the pleasure they must have felt together, he rejoiced at their happiness. He turned around, saw Rameau was dressed, and, calling him to the window with a gesture, pointed out to him the young couple promenading below.

"See," he said. "Don't you think they are well matched?"

Rameau remained silent. In an instant his mind had recalled another picture. The framework was the same—the garden before him—but not in the full sunlight; night was falling, and the darkness growing dense among the odorous trees. A man and a woman were promenading, as they were, with nonchalant step, chatting pleasantly as they walked. It was Conchita and himself. How confi-

dent they were in the present and certain of the future ! And yet their destiny grew clouded, enveloping them in darkness blacker than that of night, without any warning of the misfortune that awaited them.

The doctor heaved a sigh. Would it be the same with that youthful and happy pair who were walking in peace and pleasure ? Would the balance of fortune incline in their favor, or would their union only bring sadness and care ? For a long time past he had looked forward to their marriage, and now at the decisive moment he hesitated, seized by a sudden uneasiness, as if he had the presentiment of a misfortune. But of what avail could his fears be now ? Would it not be a greater misfortune to separate them now than to give them to one another ? Had they not been left to grow up in that union of heart, in that communion of sentiments that paves the way for love ? Had they not all along felt themselves destined for one another ? It was that certainty, that sort of moral possession that had lent such sweetness to the friendship of their early years. Besides, if they were destined to suffer, could they not bear the burden of trouble all the better for being together ? And if they should be favored with a life of unbroken bliss, would not their joy be doubled, since each would rejoice in the other's happiness ?

The doctor turned around, and with a sad and pensive look walked into his cabinet. Talvanne looked at him with astonishment, unable to comprehend the gloomy anxiety depicted on his countenance.

Did not everything breathe of hope and joy in the union of this young couple so adapted to one another ?

"What is the matter with you ?" he asked. "It would seem that that sight of loving youth, in the midst of flowers, has saddened you. Do you not wish to see them married ? If so, it is high time to inform them of your desire, for they have been exchanging loving looks for the past year or two. Buried among your papers, your mind absorbed in scientific speculations, you have perhaps seen

nothing ; but I, who am a common enough man to take an interest in the simplest affairs of life, can assure you that Robert adores Adrienne, and that on her side Adrienne does not discourage Robert. He is now twenty-eight years of age, and she is eighteen. He is dark ; she is fair. He exhibits all the physiognomic characteristics of a well-balanced mesaticephalus. I am sure you can have the utmost confidence in him. He will make her happy."

"She must be happy. That will be my last joy in life. Everything as regards me is subordinated to that child. I will talk to her ; I wish to learn from herself the secret of her heart. I will talk with Robert also. And if what you believe is true—well, we will have them get married as soon as they please."

"Let there be no delay. They know one another well enough by this time. Neither of them has a thought that the other does not know. Therefore formalities may be curtailed."

Rameau paused for a moment and replied :

"Then I must collect all the necessary documents—my marriage contract, the certificate of my daughter's birth, and so forth. These papers are locked up in a little case the key of which my wife kept, and which is in her chamber. You know I never enter that apartment, so full of painful memories for me, but once a year, on the fatal anniversary. I shall anticipate the date this time, and will make a search for the papers to-morrow. And I shall have the painful task of disturbing these sacred relics for the first time. But it is necessary and must be done."

They said no more on the subject, but descended to the dining-hall, where Robert and Adrienne were already awaiting them. The breakfast was short, and there was scarce a word spoken at the table. Rameau and Talvanne then left, taking Robert with them. The alienist did not put in an appearance that evening, and the doctor dined alone with his daughter. During the meal, he regarded her with a searching, penetrating glance, as if studying

her features and admiring the proportions of her elegant and graceful form. Adrienne noticed this keen inspection, but was too respectful to question her father on the matter. It was not until they had gone up-stairs that he decided to speak to her. He bade her sit down beside him, and taking her by the hand, said :

“Your godfather and I had an important conversation this morning, of which you were the subject.”

And as she looked up somewhat surprised, he added :

“Do not be disturbed ; you know that my one absorbing thought is to assure your happiness. All that I may have imagined, prepared, and desired, in relation to this affair, will count for nothing, if you declare that my projects do not satisfy or please you.”

She smiled, being already aware of what was coming, and rising she bent over and kissed her father tenderly.

“You are now eighteen years old,” continued the doctor ; “you are a grown girl, and you must naturally aspire to a pleasanter mode of existence than you have hitherto been accustomed to, with two uninteresting old fellows like Talvanne and myself.”

This time Adrienne could not remain silent, and interrupting her father, she said, with tender emotion :

“Nevertheless, this is the way I wish to continue to live, and I can never hope to be happier than with my godfather and you.”

“You will certainly never be more loved,” resumed Rameau ; “for since you were born we have done everything with a view to your happiness. But, my child, we will not live forever, and the tender solicitude we have always shown for you will some day rudely come to an end. We must, therefore, look to your future, and a young girl’s future means marriage. Do not think that I consider this question lightly. If you thus far have been happy with me, I have found in you my last remaining pleasure, the supreme consolation of my life. This house, that has known so much sadness and pain, has retained through

you a spark of animation and gaiety. You have been its ray, its smile. Hence, I assure you, that the thought of surrendering all this joy to another bruises my heart. But I am not selfish enough to wish you to sacrifice yourself for my happiness, and I wish to give you a companion with whom you can walk the path of life in full security."

"Then you are thinking of parting from me?"

"No, my dear child, for I hope that he who will be your husband will not deprive me of your dear presence. But, you know, a woman must follow her husband, and when you will be married, no matter how near me you may be, you will no longer belong to me in the sense you do to-day. There will always be between you and me the thought, the recollection, the image of another."

The doctor shook his head musingly, and continued :

"And yet, even now, I may be entertaining strange illusions ; who knows if already—yes, Talvanne declares that your heart no longer belongs to me alone, and that you love——"

Adrienne's fingers twitched nervously in her father's hand, her cheeks flushed, and she remained silent, not daring to raise her eyes.

"I am not reproaching you, my dear," continued the doctor. "At most, it is but a question I ask you. I have full confidence in you, and I am sure, beforehand, that if your heart has gone out to anybody in love, your choice must be such as to secure my approbation."

"Oh ! papa, I am quite sure of it."

She stopped short, ashamed of the warmth with which she had uttered these words. Rameau smiled pleasantly and went on :

"You know that everybody, even the best and the most frank, have their secrets. You cherished thoughts that I had not suspected. It is Talvanne who was observant enough to discern it ; he was not deceived by your apparent tranquillity of manner, and he guessed your little romance.

Come, tell me something about it. For at present I would like to know all."

"Oh! papa, there is nothing peculiar about it, and it is not in the least romantic. And perhaps, even, I have nursed illusions and dreamed alone, for no word has ever been exchanged between me and him of whom you speak."

"Who is he?"

She raised her pure, blue eyes, and said with naive calmness, as if no other name could fall from her lips:

"It is Robert."

Rameau heaved a sigh of relief. He had not doubted what Talvanne told him; still he felt a profound satisfaction that the husband of his daughter's choice was the one he himself desired for her.

"And you love him?"

"I only followed your example," replied the girl adroitly, "for you yourself have always treated him as a son. I felt pleasure in seeing him come to the house. He was my playmate when we were children, he was my friend in youth, he was always near me, and if he were to leave me now I know I should suffer deeply. Excepting my godfather and you, I don't know anybody else half so good. When I am troubled he comforts me. When I am gay he seems more joyous. He has always seemed to me generous, refined, and sympathetic, and if wishing to spend one's life with another means loving him, then certainly I love Robert."

While she was speaking, Rameau gazed in her face, and her candid charm filled him with delight. He did not try to analyze his sensations, he found them pleasant, and was satisfied.

"And do you think he loves you, too?" he asked. "Has he ever told you so?"

"No, papa, but I know he feels the same pleasure in my company that I do in his. He has a way of speaking to me, of smiling on me, that reveals his whole heart. When his mother was dead, you remember, I went to sit up with

Rosalie. We found poor Robert alone, for he had no relatives in Paris. On seeing me enter he was so overcome with emotion that he could scarce utter a word. He led me into his mother's chamber, and remained alone with me. We sat near the window side by side, neither of us speaking. But I could read his gratitude in his eyes. That evening, when about to leave, he took a small diamond ring, the only one his mother used to wear, and gave it to me, saying: 'It is one of the most precious souvenirs of my mother that I possess, for she wore that ring when she was a young girl, and kept it all her life; accept it from me, and always wear it.' I was embarrassed, for I did not wish to receive the jewel, and I was afraid to refuse it, lest I might offend him. He then took me gently by the hand, and placed the ring on my finger. He smiled through his sadness, and that golden ring seemed to me the first link of a chain which united us, never to be broken. When I came home I showed you the ring and told you how it came into my possession. You kissed me, but said nothing about returning it, and I was happy, for I knew then that you did not disapprove of the affection I felt for Robert. Since then you have made him regard this house as his home. Now I see him every day; we walk together in the garden, we talk and laugh, and I am so happy with him that I do not know how I could be more so."

"But has he never spoken a word to you that could give any intimation of his hopes?"

"What need of it?" answered Adrienne, with charming innocence; "each of us knows the other's heart."

"Then you are sure of him?"

"Yes, papa, as sure as he should be of me."

"Without having come to any understanding in the matter?"

"Without any understanding except that of our looks and smiles."

"Then you wish to become his wife?"

"Yes, papa, for he would be a good son to you, and

nothing would be changed in our mode of life. My godfather would also be pleased, for he likes Robert. That is easily seen, for he does not know how to dissemble. And when he disapproves of anything, or suspects anybody, he soon shows it in an unmistakable manner. Well, he has always been as kind and friendly toward Robert as toward me, and he has never missed an occasion to talk to me about him."

"Then you think he intended to encourage you?"

"Yes, papa, and I was much pleased."

"And as for me, you did not trouble yourself about my opinion?"

Adrienne leaped to her father's knee, and putting her arms around his neck and kissing him lovingly, said :

"Oh ! you ! I knew you would not refuse me anything, if I only asked you in the right way."

"Your peace of life, however," said the doctor gravely, "is involved in this affair, and it must not be decided lightly. I believe as you do, that Robert is a good and honorable young man, and I know that as a physician he has a brilliant future. But if you could only realize the unexpected difficulties there are liable to arise. Life is full of snares, and we cannot take too great precautions to avoid them. It is the duty of parents to give their children the benefit of their experience in this respect. Talvanne and I will elicit from Robert a confession of his feeling toward you. And if it is such as we have reason to hope—if he cherishes the sentiments that we attribute to him—then, my child, hard though it be for me to yield a part of my rights to your precious heart, I will entrust it to him, and your happiness will be secured."

And as Adrienne, her arms around her father's neck, deluged him with kisses, a part of which only was doubtless intended for him, the doctor rose, and gently withdrawing from his daughter's embrace, said :

"Now go, my darling, and let me work. Sleep tranquilly, so that your lover will meet you to-morrow morning with bright eyes and fresh cheeks."

The girl bade her father good-night and, her face radiant with joy, retired. Rameau, left alone, took some reports from his desk and tried to read. But his mind was distracted, and he could not concentrate it on his work. The lines grew dim, and before his eyes he saw only a young couple marching with light step, exchanging joyous looks and thoughts. At this sight his heart swelled within his bosom, and an intoxicating pleasure that he had not felt for a long time thrilled through him, and it seemed to him that the fountain of sweet emotions which he thought was forever dried up within, gushed forth and overflowed anew.

With his head bent on his bosom he gave himself up to gloomy thoughts. He reflected on the fact that man is never wholly divorced from earthly ties, and that joy or sorrow always finds in him a soil prepared for exhaustless seed. The tree struck by the lightning and shrivelled by the winter will blossom no more; its trunk will slowly decay and crumble into dust, to form a part of the universal mass. After years of sterility it will not suddenly bloom forth anew, revived by a fresh sap through all its branches. But he, a trunk, inert and withered for so long a period, once more regains the faculty of feeling, and consequently of suffering. He saw himself again united by powerful bonds to living creatures, and capable of taking an active, feverish interest in the vicissitudes of their existence. He believed himself dead, and he discovered, at once to his horror and his joy, that he lived, and that he could doubtless be happy once more.

For would it not be a profound pleasure to witness this lovely girl bloom into an adorable woman? Could he not bask in the warmth of the rays of this happiness which he himself created? Little children would be born, who would grow up under his eyes, and, loving like their mother, would lavish on him their sweet caresses. A cloud passed before his eyes, which now moistened with tears. A voice within him seemed to say :

"You are unfaithful to the memory of the dead. You swore never to entertain a thought that did not refer to her. Her image alone was to be before your eyes like that of a divinity to whom you were to consecrate all your remaining days. And, behold, you profane the solitude where she was sovereign, and your heart opens to new affections, your mind to new thoughts. After having acted for fifteen years the comedy of an inconsolable grief, you are now about to cast off, in an instant, all the signs of your mourning, and replace in your affections her who seemed to have borne with her all your love to the tomb."

But his powerful mind reacted against these impressions. "Man," he said to himself, "should not support more than a certain weight of care and pain, and it would be ingratitude on his part to refuse the compensations offered to him. What can be more just than that I should feel a deep satisfaction on seeing my daughter happy? If I am not to endure pain and to enjoy the sweets of life, why was I given life at all? Besides," he thought, with a quick return to his bitter pessimism, "this apparent happiness is, perhaps, deceptive, and who knows but that I am reserved for unforeseen and still more poignant sufferings?"

He then endeavored to imagine all the disappointments and misfortunes that the future could have in store for him. He could discover none more terrible than to be deprived of his daughter. If, in the new life she was about to enter on, Adrienne should fall ill and die, what would become of him? He could not endure the thought of the void and the solitude in which he would have to live; and rising abruptly, he began to pace the room in order to distract his imagination. After a few moments his calmness returned, and he resumed his work.

On arriving, at ten o'clock the following morning, at the Rue Saint-Dominique, to receive the orders of his master, Robert was surprised to find the way barred by Rosalie. As he was about to question her, the governess opened the door of the little salon, and the young man perceived

Dr. Talvanne within, reading a journal. The alienist quickly rose, and extending his hand, said :

“Rameau is engaged ; we cannot disturb him. Sit down and keep me company while waiting. What is the latest news in the medical world ?”

“Why, doctor,” replied Robert with a smile, “I am sure you are better informed than I am in that respect.”

“As regards serious things, perhaps I am, but frivolous things, no. Tell me what is going on at the Ecole. Do they no longer perpetrate mischief, or play tricks on the professors ?”

“Oh, yes !”

“Well, what’s the latest ?”

“They say that Professor Gazan now demands, whenever he performs serious operations, which is his specialty, a year’s income from his patients as fees. He has an agency that keeps him informed regarding the financial standing of persons who are sick, and when, the other day, the husband of a lady whom he attended protested that he was not as rich as was generally believed, Gazan interrupted him, saying :

“‘Monsieur, you have a house on the Rue de Rivoli which brings you in so much, two farms in Normandy which bring so much, and so many interest-bearing bonds. Do not think you can deceive me.’ The man was dumfounded, and agreed to pay the bill.”

“Does he return the money when the operation does not succeed ?”

“Never. The patient may die, but Gazan pockets the money.”

“You see,” said Talvanne, “customs are changing nowadays. In my time such methods were unknown. Formerly medicine was a science, now it is an industry. The main point is to make money, and on this head you are going to be satisfied, for I have heard Rameau talk of a confidential mission he has to give you. You are to go to Saxony and to remain there six months. You will have

plenty of leisure to prepare your thesis for the examination for the fellowship, and you will receive a princely remuneration for your services. That is something not to be lightly considered."

Talvanne might have continued a long time without being interrupted, for Robert no longer heard him. His mind was otherwise absorbed. He blushed, looked downward, as if he feared to meet the eye of the doctor, and seemed to be engaged in examining the flowers of the carpet. The news he had heard had completely unnerved him. For two months past he had never started for the Rue Saint-Dominique without saying to himself :

"I am going to summon all my courage to-day, and speak to Dr. Rameau seriously."

To speak to the doctor seriously signified in Robert's mind that he would inform Rameau that he loved Adrienne, and ask him to give her to him in marriage.

He started firmly resolved to face the imposing look of his master. After all, was it such a difficult step? Had he not been treated like a son by the doctor? Certainly. Could he doubt of his good-will? By no means.

Though Robert had seen Rameau every day for fifteen years, and experienced only kindness at his hands, yet he could scarce help trembling whenever he came into his presence. He never opened the door of the office in which Rameau worked without a feeling of embarrassment. He never answered a question addressed to him by the doctor without experiencing a like feeling. He saw in Rameau a superior being, with whom it was difficult if not impossible to make free. He loved his daughter passionately, but he could not summon courage enough to ask him for her in marriage.

While Talvanne was speaking to him, he mused:

"What is the meaning of this whim of sending me away for six months, under the pretext of giving me an opportunity of making money, when he knows that I care very little about it, and of affording me leisure to prepare for

my examination, when he knows I have all the time necessary here? Evidently some incident has occurred of which I am ignorant, and which will alter my position in this house. The doctor wants to get me out of the way. Perhaps he has discovered that I love his daughter. Then, it is certain he does not wish to give her to me. Or, perhaps, she has been asked by somebody else, and the suit has been accepted."

At this idea, a feverish feeling came over him, and his senses seemed to swim for the moment. He felt ashamed on thinking that he had sought to win the affections of his benefactor's daughter, without first being sure of his approval. He concluded that he had acted indelicately, and was deeply pained at the thought. "But, if she loves me, after all," he said to himself, "might we not hope to overcome the father's resistance? But, then, I would seem to be making a speculation. She will be very wealthy, and I am poor. I will be accused of having abused the doctor's friendship and the position accorded me in his household, by endeavoring to capture this tender heart and simple mind."

His very sense of honor made him suffer, in the thought that he may not have acted with due propriety. And yet, he persisted in hoping that Adrienne loved him. He recalled to mind her many kindly favors and the affectionate attentions she had shown him. Could it be that she could ever belong to any other than the friend of her childhood? He rebelled at the thought, and an angry feeling took possession of him. Why should he sacrifice himself? Why should he go, and leave a free field to another? The blood mounted to his face, he raised his downcast eyes, slapped his knee determinedly, and, forgetful of where he was and with whom he was, exclaimed:

"No! That shall never be!"

He was aroused from his reverie by hearing Talvanne ask:

"What shall never be?" "You are talking to yourself,"

resumed the alienist, looking at him with a quizzical air. "That comes under the head of my specialty. Do you see imaginary beings and converse with them in a menacing tone? That shows you are suffering from the mania of persecution. That is a species of disease that is rarely cured. As a rule, medullary disease develops rapidly, and the subject becomes paralytic."

"Never mind," interrupted Robert, with a forced smile, "I am in the full possession of my senses. Or, at least, I think I am," he continued, with a tinge of bitterness in his tone. "I was thinking simply of that six months' sojourn in Saxony, and I protested against the task my master wished to impose on me."

"But I don't think he will impose it on you, if you are not satisfied with it," replied Talvanne, earnestly. "He seemed, to me, to wish to do you a favor."

"A singular favor, that, to send me away for half a year!"

"It shows he has confidence in you, when he entrusts such a difficult and important case to you."

"Cannot he get a German to attend to this German patient?"

"Pshaw! It is an archduke!"

"I do not care if it was the king!"

Talvanne bit his lips and rubbed his hands, which, with him, was a sign of sudden mental agitation. He rose from his chair, and, lowering his tone, as if he had something confidential to say, said:

"Then you have imperative reasons for remaining in Paris?"

Robert looked at him thoughtfully. He was never embarrassed in the presence of Talvanne. The alienist had always been friendly toward himself and affectionate toward Adrienne. Was it not, then, by a lucky accident he met him at that decisive moment, when he could no longer conceal the secret of his love? To reveal his thoughts to Talvanne was to reveal them to Rameau. The one would

not have known it a quarter of an hour, until the other would know it also. And what an advantage it would be if his suit were approved of by the godfather! He would have a powerful ally to defend his cause. His courage returned, he experienced a sense of relief, and he felt himself capable of discussing, supplicating, convincing.

While Robert was considering this plan, Talvanne scanned his face closely, and said to himself:

"What is that simpleton thinking of, anyway? I suddenly sprung the news on him of a six months' exile far from his sweetheart, and, behold, instead of confessing his love, he flares up, protests, declares he will not go, but studiously conceals the reason. The occasion has presented itself, when he should frankly say: 'I love your godchild, and I cannot bear the idea of living apart from her.' But let me see if he will speak! And he pretends that he is in possession of his senses. What, after all, if he is not? I have not done anything calculated to discourage him. But I must come to his assistance, and do as Socrates, who was surnamed the accoucher of minds."

"So you are absolutely determined not to leave Paris?" he resumed, looking in Robert's face with a pleasing glance.

"Absolutely determined," replied the young man.

"Some love affair, no doubt?"

"I hope you do not think so."

"Then it must be for the pleasure of passing a few hours every day in the company of two old men, like Rameau and me, that you refuse a mission which would be eagerly accepted by any man of your age. That is quite flattering for me."

Robert felt the sting of Talvanne's raillery, and was about to confess all, but as the words were on his tongue he hesitated once more.

Talvanne guessed that the young man flinched at the idea of burning his ships behind him. He realized the trepidation he felt, and, coming directly to his aid, said:

"Come, you ninny, tell me plainly, and at once, what the trouble is. You know well that, if the case is a reasonable one, you can count on my assistance, and that, if it is absurd, you can rely on my silence."

At these words, so full of goodness, Robert grasped the doctor's hand, and said :

"Well, then, know it all ; I love Adrienne, and that is why I do not wish to leave. Who knows what might happen during my absence? Am I sure even that her father has not already formed projects concerning her that might ruin all my hopes?"

Talvanne rubbed his hands, and looking at Robert with a stern expression, said :

"Ah ! *mon garçon*, your aspirations are pretty high !"

"Doctor——" stammered the young man.

"I understand that you are determined to remain here."

"Most certainly," interrupted Robert, somewhat confused.

"And what does Adrienne think of all this?"

"I have never uttered a word that could lead her to suspect my sentiments toward her."

"And you see her every day?"

Talvanne paused, cast a mischievous glance at his dumfounded friend, and with a laugh continued :

"You are a very reserved young man, and highly honorable ; accept my compliments. But are you quite sure, on the other hand, that you have not acted somewhat boobyish? When one really loves a girl he is right not to disturb her tranquillity with passionate protestations ; but when she has near her a godfather like Dr. Talvanne, he must be very distrustful not to endeavor to clear up the situation by being a trifle confidential with him."

"What do you mean?" asked Robert anxiously.

"Simply this : that it has taken me a whole half-hour to find out what I wanted to know, and which you ought to have told me without any effort on my part. Now, all that remains is for us to go and see the girl's father."

Talvanne laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, and opening the door, pushed him toward Rameau's cabinet. But Robert, reluctant to face his master on such an errand, stopped short in the corridor, and whispered :

"Doctor, tell me truly, do you think I can broach the subject thus brusquely?"

"Do you want to communicate with him through ambassadors, like a prince of the blood?"

"But what shall I say?"

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"What will the doctor think of it?"

"That his daughter is pretty enough to make any one fall in love with her."

"Do you think he will receive me favorably?"

"Would I bring you to him if I had any doubt of it?"

At this Robert regained a little courage, and without saying more followed Talvanne into the doctor's cabinet. Enveloped in his long, black gown, over which his white beard flowed, Rameau looked at them enter, without moving from his chair. His eyes sparkled from under his bushy brows, and his lips wore a benignant smile. Talvanne went over beside him, and pointing to Robert, who stood motionless, said :

"I bring you this somewhat unwilling visitor, and not without considerable trouble, I assure you. I have rarely met any one more determined in his resistance. It required as much effort to compel him to confess his love as if it were a crime. But no matter, *hebemus confitentem reum*. What shall we do with him?"

Rameau, who had arisen from his chair, and was leaning against the chimney-piece, replied with a smile :

"Make a happy man of him!"

Robert grew pale with emotion, and Rameau advanced and clasped him warmly by the hand.

"Well, so far so good," exclaimed Talvanne; "let us now attend to the girl."

And as he spoke he went out hurriedly, leaving the doc-

tor and his protégé together. The ice was now broken between them, and Robert gave full vent to his feelings. He revealed all his day-dreams, hopes, doubts, and fears. And in these passionate words the doctor recognized, with a melancholy pleasure, the echo of his own vanished feelings. Yes, he who loved thus passionately loved sincerely, deeply, without reserve, and would never change.

He would understand Adrienne's delicate and tender nature and their two hearts would beat in unison. No germ of discord existed to come between them, as had been the case with Conchita and himself, on account of their religious differences. Robert, brought up by a pious mother, had retained all the religious sentiments of his childhood. His active intellect impelled him to discuss freely in his own mind many doctrines of religion, but the violent persecutions to which he saw it subjected only served to strengthen his wavering faith. The day when Adrienne would ask him to bow down with her, he would do so, and their mutual love would be strengthened by their mutual faith.

At this thought a sigh escaped from Rameau, and his face was darkened by bitter recollections. This great mind that from its lofty eminence dominated human thought, cursed, for a moment, the supreme perspicacity that, in making him so superior to his fellow-men, deprived him of the happiness that is the portion of the humble and the lowly. A new Prometheus, he tried to penetrate the mysteries of heaven, and blasted by misfortune, he bore in his heart a devouring wound. But had he not paid the debt of all his kindred, and by reason of the sufferings he endured, should not Adrienne's life be exempt from care and sorrow? Robert had promised that it should be so with passionate ardor, and he was willing to believe him. Sincerity shone in his eyes as clearly as his love and gratitude.

"My dear boy," said Rameau gravely, "I confide to you the most precious thing I possess. You know how unfortunate I have been. My daughter is the only being

that attaches me to life. Hence it is my life that is confided to your care. I have educated you, I have smoothed for you the path of life, you are my pupil and almost my son. Your grandfather was my benefactor, and I owed him more than you owe me, for, without me, you would be able to become a distinguished man ; your family were able to give you a good education, whereas I was the son of a common laborer, destined to remain rude and ignorant, had not Dr. Servant picked me up and created a future for me. Up to this morning I had not discharged the debt I owed to your family and to yourself, but now I give you my daughter, and to reckon from this instant it is you who become my debtor."

"All my days shall be employed in the endeavor to discharge that debt."

"Very well, I believe you, and I thank you."

They were standing face to face, holding one another's hands with a warm clasp. The door opened, and Talvanne and Adrienne entered the room. Her sweet face beamed with joy and her raptured looks turned from her father to her lover. They all stood for a moment silent and motionless, as if they feared to lose the delightful sensation they experienced. At length Rameau held out his arms to his daughter, who with a smiling look of gratitude sank upon his bosom. The joyous father then brought the young lovers together, looked in their faces for an instant as if to read on their brows the secret of their destiny, placed their hands in one another, and, bowing his patriarchal head, said :

"My children, I wish you happiness !"

They remained for an instant with hands joined, smiling in joyous surprise as if they did not as yet dare to believe in the reality of their happiness, and then without uttering a word they retired from the room, leaning on one another, as they should continue to do for the remainder of their life.

A moment after their light step was heard on the grav-

elled walk in the garden below, and the two old men, their hearts touched by the radiant flowering of that love which deprived each of them of a portion of his daughter's heart, saw the happy pair whispering in tender tones, with smiling lips, oblivious of everything save their own happiness, promenading in the joyous sunshine among the odorous flowers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCOVERY.

THE morning after the betrothal of Robert and Adrienne Rameau repaired to the mortuary chamber into which he entered only once a year. The house was silent. Adrienne was busy in her little work-chamber on the first floor, and Rosalie, on seeing the doctor directing his steps toward the apartment of her whom she continued to mourn as well as himself, had retired into another room. Rameau crossed the corridor, and reached the door, pale and agitated. The key was in the lock, as if the occupant, instead of being gone forever, might return at any moment. The doctor paused for an instant, as if debating with himself whether he should not defer the melancholy visit. But an effort of will urged him forward, and he opened the door with a firm hand and entered.

The room was in a state of semi-darkness that was made more obscure by his sudden passage from the light outside. He remained standing in the midst of this obscurity and silence, impressed by the sight of that undisturbed chamber, starting at the faintest noise, and looking with a troubled glance as if to see if some one was walking beside him. His eyes, gradually becoming accustomed to the darkness, began to distinguish the outlines of the furniture. There was the table, and there was the

long chair on which Conchita loved to recline and while away the hours. A ray of light passing through a hole in the closed curtain glittered on the framework of the clock, and the bed in the alcove, with the hangings drawn aside, was indistinctly visible. A faint odor, like the perfume of faded flowers, floated in the air. And Rameau recalled with profound emotion the heaps of bouquets on the bier on that fatal day, and the heavy fragrance of these funereal gifts.

He turned around and looked at the velvet-covered supports on which the coffin had rested that contained all that he held dearest on earth. The mournfulness of this solitude, filled with the memory of the dead, overpowered him, and, as if he had felt himself pursued by a spectre, he stepped hurriedly to the window, opened it, flung back the shutters, and then returned to the centre of the room. It was empty, dusty, filled by the light that poured in through the open window, and from the wall the portrait of Conchita smiled sadly down, with the bouquet of forget-me-nots in her hand.

It was all that remained of the departed wife and friend—this canvas shining in its gilded frame, a sad reminder, since perpetuating the beauty of the woman and the talent of the painter, it made their loss all the more lamentable. Rameau lapsed into a mournful reverie. In a moment all the past came back before him—that brilliant period when he mounted to the heights gilded by the rising sun, now left behind buried in the shade of night, the happy period when he walked between love and friendship, both now vanished, leaving behind in the place of hope and joy only doubt and sorrow and pain.

An overpowering feeling of grief took possession of him. Why was it not he who had gone? He would have gone to sleep in the tranquil repose of nothingness, and would not be compelled to drag out a miserable existence harassed by futile regrets. All his great achievements—his admirable works, his numerous discoveries,

fame, and glory—he forgot all, and was ready to sacrifice all for a few hours of that vanished happiness.

Seated by the table, on which were still lying in scattered disorder the little articles that Conchita daily used, he gazed at them for a time in tearful contemplation. His love for his daughter, his affection for Talvanne and Robert—everything was forgotten, and his life appeared to him like a black abyss in which all that could render him happy was engulfed forever. He picked up with tender touch a little piece of needle-work, in which the needle was still sticking, as if awaiting the fingers that plied it to return and resume their task.

He had often seen that piece of embroidery in the hands of Conchita—it seemed to him to still bear the mark of her fingers ; to have retained their warmth, and preserved the sweetness of her presence. He raised it to his lips and kissed it with a melancholy pleasure. He was alone, hidden from all eyes, and had the right to abandon himself to his grief like the feeblest of men, to cease for the moment to be the great and illustrious philosopher and to become a weak mortal, nursing his misery and sorrow.

He remained a long time in this gloomy contemplation. The clock, stopped at the moment of Conchita's death, had not since moved its gilded hands over its enamelled dial. The hours were gliding by, and the entire day might have passed without anybody daring to enter that room or disturb its occupant. The easy opening and shutting of the doors, the stealthy step of the servants on the stairway, the conversation in low tones, alone broke the silence ; but their confused sounds did not awaken Rameau's attention. He had forgotten his midday meal ; his mind had deserted its material tenement and, heedless of the present, was enveloped in the past.

The sun gradually disappeared behind the large trees of the esplanade, and the shades of evening were coming on. The portrait on the wall grew dimmer, and its outlines grew less distinct, as if fading in the distance. Rameau

wished to look at it from a more favorable light, and, rising, broke the spell of his reverie. He saw himself in the deserted and dusty chamber, he remembered that he had come there for a serious purpose, and that instead of plunging into mystical contemplation, he should accomplish the object of his visit. He passed his hand across his brow, and recovering his self-possession, directed his steps toward the mantel-shelf, where an enamel cup, untouched by human hand for fifteen years, contained Conchita's bunch of keys. He picked them up in his trembling hand, selected a tiny gilt key, went over to the bureau, and with a pious reverence opened the drawers. In the middle one he found the letter-paper bearing the initials C. R., together with the envelopes and a pretty ivory penholder. A photograph of little Adrienne dressed in white, the legs and arms bare, standing on a chair, smiled from its enamel frame. Rameau took it up, and on looking at it closely, discovered, to his astonishment, a miniature of Munzel at the bottom.

It was he, without doubt, just as he appeared in the early days of their friendship, in his twenty-fifth year, fair, with his blue eyes and look of inexplicable sadness. The portrait was signed with the monogram which the doctor had so frequently seen at the bottom of the small canvases which the artist had painted to fill the orders of picture dealers. How did this miniature, so completely foreign to the style of Munzel, come to be placed in this drawer, and united with the photograph of Adrienne?

The obstinate hostility that his wife had manifested toward his friend, in the beginning, came back to Rameau's mind, then the sudden disappearance after the reception of the portrait of Mme. Etchevarray, and finally the close relations of Munzel and Conchita, when the latter sat for her portrait. Doubtless, at this period, the young woman had seen this miniature at the studio and had asked for it, as a souvenir of their friendship. But how came it that she had not shown it to her husband, and that he did not

know it was in her possession? Why was it hidden at the bottom of a drawer, in a piece of furniture which was closed to all but herself?

Why should he think it surprising that Conchita should receive Frantz's portrait? He should only be glad of it and should look on the picture with pleasure. It would be to him a precious souvenir of the friend so tragically lost and bitterly regretted. But why should it be hidden away like some forbidden object? What harm was there in possessing that picture? And why, on coming across it, did Rameau grow agitated? Might he not discover a portrait of Talvanne, also?

At this idea, a frown furrowed his pale brow, and a bitter smile played on his lips. No, he would not have found in Conchita's drawer a portrait of Talvanne, and, if he did, his heart would not have beaten more quickly, the perspiration of agony would not have moistened his brow, he would have seen in the circumstance nothing suspicious, improper, or reprehensible. The sound and solid honesty of his friend would have covered all with its unassailable prestige, whereas Munzel——

Having come to this conclusion in his stormy imaginings, Rameau stamped his foot in his anger, he uttered an exclamation that resounded in the solemn silence of the chamber, and wishing to compel himself to reject these suspicions as absurd as they were odious, he exclaimed aloud:

“Come! my mind is wandering! What poison has flowed into my heart, what folly has taken possession of my imagination? Frantz? I might as well suspect my brother?”

He raised his eyes and his looks met the portrait of the charming young woman who smiled down on him, with her little blue bouquet in her hand. Oh! the sweet smile of that exquisite mouth, the adorable look of those languid eyes. For weeks the painter had seen and admired them. He had reproduced them on the canvas, and his brush had

modelled all the outlines of these luscious lips, as if caressing them with a kiss. Was it possible that he could have contemplated all these beauties, without becoming passionately in love with his model?

A dark shadow passed over Rameau's mind. A thousand thoughts that had never touched him with their wings of flame, cruelly consumed him. All Talvanne's suspicions, at the beginning of their intimacy with Munzel; the hostility of his friend, as instinctive as that of a faithful dog; his warnings when Conchita went alone to Frantz's studio,—all this came back to his mind, distinct, terrible, overwhelming. He did not now experience that confidence which made him receive with raillery all these suspicions. In an instant, consuming jealousy had destroyed it with its deadly leaven. Rameau suddenly endured such tortures that he could with difficulty prevent himself from crying out in anguish. He threw down the miniature that he held in his hand, and then with an anxiety that he could no longer subdue, he began to rummage all the drawers, all the compartments of the bureau, throwing aside rather hastily and rudely those objects that a moment before were adored as sacred relics.

Seized with a horrible curiosity, he now wished to penetrate the secrets of the woman with whom he had lived for ten years in confiding serenity. He violated the mysteries of death, he profaned the silence of the tomb, chagrined that Conchita was no longer before him, not for the sake of loving her, but of interrogating, upbraiding, abusing her. All his love turned to hatred, at the thought that she, whom he had so passionately regretted, whom he mourned even at that very moment, could have deceived him, could have withheld from him a frolic, or concealed an adventure. He clenched his hands and ground his teeth. Yes, it had come to that. He admitted to himself that the dead woman might have been infamous, after all, and he sought fiercely for proofs of her crime.

To hasten his task, he pulled the drawers from the bu-

reau, and emptied their contents on the carpet. His restless hands explored every corner and crevice with the skill of a detective. He seemed to suspect a secret hiding-place, but he found nothing, and his anger, deprived of fuel, consumed itself, the more furiously as it was the less founded. All at once he uttered a cry of surprise. In examining the inner partition of the bureau, his fingers ran against a bulging spot, and, pressing it, he discovered a double bottom in the shelf.

He remained motionless for a moment. The eagerness and determination of his search for the proof of her guilt was now equalled by his fear of having discovered it. He was tortured by doubt, but still it was doubt, and not certainty. The proof was now before him in that obscure and dusty corner. He had only to insert his hand to bring it forth, and yet he hesitated, overcome in presence of this material fact, of this palpable testimony, which would dissipate all doubt and forever destroy his illusion.

He looked in scrutinizingly. His eye caught a small white package, tied round with a faded ribbon, in the narrow space. He thrust in his hand, and, drawing it forth, went over to the window and sat down. He slowly untied the ribbon, removed the paper envelope, and found over a score of letters. A last supreme hope was kindled in his heart. If, after all, they were letters of her father or mother, that she had kept as pious souvenirs !

But why conceal them, if they contained nothing wrong ? Why this double bottom, and this mistrust ? No ! The correspondence was not innocent ; it did not come, it could not come from any other than a lover ! Everything attested it, proved it, and the name of the wretch would appear at the bottom of the infamous letters.

With a delicacy of touch, as if he were handling poison, Rameau unfolded one of the faded letters, and recognized, with horror, Munzel's writing. He ran his eye over the accusing lines. It was the first letter received by Conchita after Munzel's departure, and the pain of the separa-

tion was depicted with passionate eloquence. Love burst forth in every sentence, but the feeling of remorse was painted with a power of expression that made Rameau shudder. Certainly, the friend was guilty, but the wife more so. The whole story of the crime was traced here in words of burning passion and sorrow : the resolute will of the mistress, who summoned her lover back, and the fervent protestations of the miserable wretch, tortured between the pleasure of his memories and the execration of his treason. He cursed the weakness that had induced him to betray his friend, yet his love was such that he could not sincerely regret his crime. And thus racked by the regret for his happiness and the thought of his ignominy, he fled beyond the seas, to make sure his escape from his dangerous temptation.

All the horrible reality of the past appeared to Rameau at that moment. He understood why Munzel lamented, in telling him that he loved, but that an imperative reason compelled him to go away. He recalled the pale brow of the wounded man in the little soap-factory of Saint-Maur, and his supplicating looks when dying in Talvanne's room at Vincennes. Munzel was almost happy in dying under the eyes of Rameau, in his arms, aided by him, as if by receiving his care he also received his forgiveness.

He remembered how he spoke to him, and all the suppliance, the regret, the tenderness in his weakened voice. Oh ! Frantz ! Companion of youth ! Friend of so many happy and sorrowful hours, treated like a brother for so many years, was it possible that he could have forgotten all, and for a woman's sake ? What poison love must have poured into his heart, to extinguish all these delicate sentiments, all this noble pride that lent such value to his friendship. What ! For such short-lived bliss, the awakening from which had been so cruel, to betray all, to profane all ! To outrage a man for whom he would have died without hesitation ! To sully the honor of him who would have risked for him his life and liberty !

A feeling of sorrow took possession of Rameau. His suffering was no longer physical; he had lost all feeling of anger. Jealousy no longer stirred his blood. The storm was higher up; it raged within his brain. He deplored his ruined faith, his vanished illusions. He had believed in humanity alone, and humanity had betrayed him. He had made man the only master of nature, and the man, in whom he had placed his most lively confidence, had proved to be miserable and infamous. What, then, remained? Nothing.

He turned to his philosophy in his despair. It was impotent. He appealed to it for comfort, reason, argument. It returned no answer that could relieve his mind or soothe his heart. In his despair he exclaimed: "The faithful at least have God." Then, by an uprising of his rebellious mind, he protested against this surrender of his convictions. Was not this falling back on the idea of a superior being an indication of cowardice? Did not this need of connecting himself with a celestial power arise from the fear of seeing himself abandoned and given over to himself? He had formerly laughed at this need, at this fear, and to-day he experienced them. He was on the point of yielding.

The humiliation entailed by such weakness gave rise to a sudden violence in his heart. He laughed cynically. Ah! ah! the supreme succor of religion! Was it then this secret anguish, which he now suffered, that, at the moment of death, bent so many unbelieving minds at the feet of religion? He had just experienced the sentiment of moral solitude, which appalled the most sceptical and impelled them to populate that solitude with a God. He rebelled against such cowardly hypocrisy.

Was this religion, which was represented as a supreme and sole consolation, anything else than a lie and a deception? Was not devotion marvellously allied with error? He knew what the devotee could dare. He had loved one, and piety did not turn her away from vice. It even in-

duced her to practice it ; the certainty of absolution facilitated her fall. A short repentance, a few prayers, and the woman, assured of her forgiveness, returned to evil. Could anything more infamous be conceived than this periodicity of repentance and crime?

He was at this moment seized by an access of fury. A cold perspiration covered his pale face. He would have slain the guilty one had she appeared in his presence. He no longer accused Frantz. It was she who was responsible for all. It was she who had seduced her accomplice. He looked back, and saw himself hated by her. From the day when he had refused to lend himself to her mystic fantasies, she had rejected him from her heart, and between her and him her religion was erected, like an accursed barrier.

He paced the room excitedly, tumbling aside every article of furniture that came in his way. His anger pursued her who had betrayed him beyond the tomb. He heaped reproaches, abuse on her memory, and the more he thought on the affair the more aggravated her offence appeared to his mind. He raised his head suddenly, and his eyes fell on the accursed canvas from which Conchita smiled down, with her love-flowers in her hand. It seemed to him that the charming face looked at him in defiance. It was at her lover she smiled thus, he said to himself.

A wave of wrath bounded from his heart to his brain. With a muttered curse he seized the gilded frame, rent it from the wall, and flung it on the floor. The noise resounded throughout the house as it smashed to pieces in a cloud of dust. The portrait still smiled from the canvas as it lay on the floor. Rameau advanced, and stamped his heel on the charming face. Growing more excited, he trampled on it with frenzied rage, exclaiming :

“There ! miserable wretch, base and false creature ! Would that I could crush thyself as I do this type of thy hypocrisy !”

With clenched hand and disordered hair and frenzied

rage, he seemed bereft of his senses. As he continued to heap his abuse on the dead, the door of the room was opened, and his daughter, impelled by uneasiness and trembling with emotion, appeared. On seeing her enter, Rameau suddenly grew quiet. He gazed at his daughter and imagined that he saw in her the image of Conchita, but with the blonde hair and blue eyes of Munzel. Adrienne seeing her father in the midst of the débris around, his clothes in disorder, and acting like a madman, did not dare to advance a step. Rameau, after a pause, cried out :

“What do you come here for?”

The young girl grew pale, and extending her hands supplicatingly, began :

“Father——”

“Silence !” he broke in with an angry gesture. “Don’t repeat that word, and especially in this infamous room. Go away from my sight ! let me see you no more ! You fill me with horror !”

At these words, so different from those which that father so tenderly loved addressed to her every day, Adrienne gave a start, as if to escape from some terrible apparition. The blood flowed back to her heart, which seemed to sink within her. A haze obscured her sight, her feet weakened under her, and her face assumed a livid hue.

“Pray, what is the matter ? you frighten me,” she stammered. “Why do you scold me so ? Have I done anything wrong ?”

“Wrong ! you are the very incarnation of wrong,” cried Rameau, his eyes aflame with fury. “Wrong ! you are the living expression of wrong ! You are wrong itself ! Yes, you are the odious proof of the infamy, whose memory you perpetuate ! I do not know what prevents me from killing you !”

And as he spoke he seized her by the shoulder and shook her violently. She did not utter a word, overwhelmed with fear as she was, not for herself, but for her

father. She believed him to be insane. Her heart was bruised with pain, the tears rolled down her cheeks, her strength gave way, and she sank to her knees, as if pleading for mercy. On seeing her prostrate at his feet, Rameau's reason returned. He now only saw before him the child on whom he had so fondly doted for the past eighteen years.

He reached out his hands to her, and cried ;

"Adrienne."

"Oh ! it is over ; it is you ; you are yourself once more," exclaimed the girl in an access of joy.

She tried to put her arms around his neck, to appease him, to reconquer him. But he chanced to glance over the room. His eyes again rested on the demolished portrait, the torn letters, the scattered furniture. All the terrible truth again took possession of his mind, and his face again assumed an implacable expression. He pushed the girl from him, tore himself from her embrace, and in a thundering voice said :

"Away ! No more pretence ! I do not wish to be any longer deceived. Begone from here !"

With hand extended, standing erect and trembling with anger, he pointed to the door. Adrienne, crushed by the sudden transition from hope to the most cruel deception, did not even utter a sigh. She turned deathly pale, and fell prostrate on the floor. At the same moment Rosalie, attracted by the noise, entered. She saw the young girl lying in the midst of the shattered furniture ; she flung herself on her, lifted her, enfolded her in her arms, and felt her to assure herself that she was still living. She cast a beseeching glance at Rameau, who was standing sombre, moveless, and impassible, and then, without uttering a word, raised the girl in her arms, and passing by the father with her precious burden, disappeared from the room. She had no sooner gone than Rameau also passed out, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and walked slowly to his cabinet.

Rosalie, on reaching Adrienne's apartment, called out excitedly for assistance. Two servants hurried to her presence. As they raised their hands to heaven, uttering exclamations of alarm, Rosalie sharply said to them :

"Silence ! Mademoiselle has been taken suddenly ill. Let one of you prepare her bed, and the other run down and tell the coachman to drive immediately for Dr. Talvanne at Vincennes, and the valet to hasten for Robert and bring him immediately."

They hurried away without a word. Rosalie, now left alone, laid Adrienne on a sofa, and taking a bottle of eau-de-cologne, endeavored to revive her. Lying, with her rich blonde hair loosened, her eyes closed, and her face white as marble, like a youthful martyr, the young girl presented such a picture of beauty that Rosalie forgot herself a moment to gaze at her. Then, seized with uneasiness, she bathed the temples and the palms of her hands, reviving her, tending her ; she talked to her, called her softly and tenderly, but the girl still remained moveless. A profound silence again reigned in the house. The storm had ceased, but the calm that succeeded was perhaps more pregnant with menace and violence.

A rapid step in the corridor startled Rosalie, and opening the door she found herself in the presence of Robert. He asked no questions, and she offered no explanation. He saw the girl stretched, stiff and motionless. He took her by the hand, felt her pulse, and, somewhat reassured, examined her face closely. The eyes had grown purple, and the teeth were firmly set.

"Bring me some ether," he said, addressing Rosalie. She hurried out, and in a twinkling reappeared with a bottle and a spoon. Robert poured out a few drops, and not without difficulty succeeded in introducing the liquor between her tightened teeth. A slight glow tinged her cheeks ; she uttered a sigh, and slowly lifted her eyelids. She appeared to recognize who was attending her, a mournful smile passed over her colorless lips, and she again grew

pale and inert. But the swoon had passed away, and the hands, a moment before icy and rigid, had become now moist and supple.

"She must be put in bed," said Robert. And as Rosalie nodded her assent, he added :

"Where is her father?"

The old governess contracted her brow, pondered for a moment, as if she understood that she had to act a serious part, and then, without looking in his face, replied :

"The doctor is gone out since breakfast. But we have sent for him, as also for Dr. Talvanne."

"Come," he said, without waiting for further explanations, "let us lift her up ; we can carry her ; she is not heavy, the little darling."

Her bedroom-door was open. The chamber was hung in white silk, ornamented with pink flowers, with furniture white, fresh, clean, virginal, all arranged with exquisite taste. Robert entered it for the first time, and it seemed to him that the danger of death alone could afford an excuse for the violation of so sacred a spot. He bent over the girl's placid face, and he shuddered at the thought these beautiful eyes now closed might never look on him again. He wished to dispel this gloomy presentiment. He saw everything around him animated and joyous. But at the same moment a cloud passed over the sun, the skies grew dark, and the chamber sombre and gloomy. He heard confusedly Rosalie say to him :

"Return to the parlor. I will call you as soon as I have put her to bed."

He retired mechanically, troubled in mind, beginning to experience a violent uneasiness. He appealed to his memory to recall what maladies manifested, as a primary symptom, syncope followed by a state of complete physical prostration. There were a score of such at least. "What would become of me," he thought, "if I were obliged to treat her ! In what a state of anxiety I would live ! How limited is this knowledge of which we are so proud, and how

we understand its impotence when we have to depend on it in serving those whom we love! What will Dr. Rameau do?" The thought that Adrienne's father would soon arrive and himself combat the malady aroused Robert's waning courage. He had such a complete faith in his master that he recovered his calmness while awaiting his arrival.

He felt confident and tranquil, like the soldier commanded by an ever-victorious general. The doctor, with his unerring glance, would diagnose the illness. And as to the treatment to be undertaken, his marvellously inventive mind would certainly discover some sovereign remedy. Rameau had so many times performed miracles, like the thaumaturgus of antiquity, that Robert entertained no fear but that at the decisive moment a prodigy would be performed that would assure the safety of the patient. She was his own daughter! What would he not be able to effect, when the dearest being on earth to him was threatened? Frequently, Robert knew, physicians, and not the least celebrated either, had shrunk from the task of treating their own wives and children. They had experienced the same confusion and annihilation of the faculties that he himself had just felt so keenly. But would not Rameau be proof against such weakness? Was he not by his force of character and his superior intellect above the ordinary grade of humanity?

Rosalie, in passing through the parlor, aroused the young man from his meditations. He questioned her with a look.

"She seems to be sleeping," she replied, in a low tone. "You may come in."

He approached the bed with noiseless step, and there saw Adrienne lying, her eyes closed as before, but with a healthy blush in her cheeks. Her white arm, lying on the coverlet, palpitated, as if all the nerves were set in motion by an interior agitation. The respiration was quick and somewhat sibilant, and the teeth set, as usual, by a violent contraction. This grave condition of the patient re-

awakened fears. No ; Adrienne was not sleeping. And the utter prostration in which she was buried indicated some serious organic disorders.

He arose and went over to the window. The soldiers were going through their daily drill on the esplanade of the Invalides. He looked at the clock ; an hour had already passed since his arrival at the house. A feverish impatience seized him. What was Rameau doing that he would not come ? Where was Talvanne ? What should he prescribe in their absence, and how could he dare to decide on it ? He felt it impossible for him thus to remain alone by the bedside of her whom he adored and watch her lying before him in utter unconsciousness. He was about to ring the bell when the rattle of a carriage in the yard stopped his hand. He felt immediate relief. At last assistance had come ; he would be no longer left to himself.

The voice of Talvanne on the stairway led him to the door of the parlor. He opened it, and the alienist entered, almost breathless.

"Ah, here you are !" he said, excitedly. "Well, how is she ?"

"All the time the same. A sort of febrile somnolence——"

Talvanne, interrupting him, said :

"Let us make an examination."

He passed into the room. Rosalie was standing by the head of the bed. Talvanne looked at Adrienne attentively as she lay moveless. He gently raised her eyelid. A sudden strabismus had dimmed her sight. He felt the forehead, crowned with its wealth of golden hair, and found it burning. He placed his hand under her neck and felt it minutely. Adrienne heaved a painful sigh. Talvanne's face became overcast, and he glanced at Rosalie and Robert. He noticed that they were anxiously awaiting his judgment. He shook his head, coughed dryly, and said :

"We must see——"

Then, addressing Rosalie :

"Where is Rameau ?"

"He has just come in this moment."

As Robert manifested profound surprise at these words, and was about to question her, Rosalie, with an air of authority, took Talvanne aside, and, in a trembling voice, said :

"Go down and find him ; he is in his office, and try and bring him to reason. The most unfortunate things took place here to-day. God grant that all this will not cost us the life of our poor child !"

Talvanne, astounded at this information, was about to ask for a more complete explanation. She seemed to read his thought, and, cutting short his curiosity, said :

"It is not for me to enlighten you. Go down to him ; question him. He will tell you what took place, if he wish and if he dare to do so. Yes, he will dare. He is a terrible man. A little while ago I thought he was going to kill that poor little creature there !"

"Kill her !" repeated Talvanne, growing pale ; "Rosalie, reflect a little on what you say."

"He did not reflect on what he did," she replied, with bitterness. "He was crazy—crazy with anger !"

She paused an instant, and then continued, in a serious tone :

"But why make the innocent suffer for the sins of others ?"

Rosalie and Talvanne looked in one another's faces, both deeply moved. These words were enough. A mysterious communication had taken place between them. In a second everything was explained, and Talvanne was prepared for what he was to hear. He exclaimed :

"Ah ! Ah !"

And these two interjections signified plainly :

"What ! You knew so many things, for such a length of time, without anybody knowing it ?"

To which the good Rosalie replied by an affirmative nod. Talvanne then turned toward Robert, who had remained standing beside the bed, and said :

“Wait for me here, I will be up in a moment with Rameau.”

And, leaving the young man, assisted by Rosalie, he hastened his steps toward his friend's cabinet.

CHAPTER X.

NEW REVELATIONS.

AFTER this last access of rage which had driven him to the most violent extremity, Rameau remained for some time in a state of immobility. Seated in his deep arm-chair, he felt as if overcome with fatigue, and his brain seemed to be a void. One might have cried out to him that the house was on fire, and he would not have stirred. He was indifferent to everything, and the shipwreck of his life left him prostrated—annihilated. What had he to fear now? What could happen to him worse than that which he had already endured? Was his life, irremediably wrecked, worth saving? What regret should he feel in closing his eyes forever? He would only cease to look upon this earth, so fruitful in misfortune; this world, so full of baseness. He would pass happily into nothingness—that is to say, insensibility.

Everything had deceived, betrayed him, in this miserable life that he cursed. Fate had not even the charity to respect his last illusion. He was destined to suffer the pangs of passion, to taste its bitterness, to feel its thorns. He had been knowingly tortured, and his torturers were beyond his reach. There was no vengeance for him. Death had prevented that. And he, like an idiot, bitterly mourn-

ing the guilty pair, for the alleviation of whose sufferings he had even attempted the impossible.

Oh! if it were only to begin over again! If he only had them before him to spew his contempt and hatred on them, to delight in their misery, and to see them tremble with icy fear. But no, they had breathed their last breath in his nursing arms, under his comforting look, calm as if their consciences had nothing to reproach them with. They had died as they had lived—liars and hypocrites! And what was to become of himself? Where would he find the energy necessary to endure this last crushing misfortune? To still live, after so many deceptions, when life had nothing to offer but new tortures! Why should he desire it? Supreme rest, behold what was needed.

And he could so easily procure it! He had only to take a few steps, to open a closet, and from among the many poisonous substances that it contained, take a bottle, swallow a few drops, and painlessly sink into everlasting sleep. There need be no scandal around his grave. It would be thought a case of cerebral congestion. The traces of the poison would be difficult to discover, and his end would appear natural.

He smiled grimly on feeling himself master of his destiny. He experienced a sort of relief, as one feels after the settlement of a difficulty. Having made up his mind to rid himself of all his sorrow and pain, he now felt them less keenly. He found the strength to rise and take a few steps around the room. His glance fell, in passing, on the papers that covered his desk, and he said to himself that he would not complete the work he had begun.

After all, of what use was that work in which he had taken so much interest? What value did it possess? On what certain foundation had he placed it? Was not everything in this frail world subject to error? Who could flatter himself with being right, and knowing the absolute truth?

Thus meditating, he proceeded slowly to the labora-

tory. He opened a closet, and scanned a number of red-labelled bottles on the shelves. He took one, a small vial, held it up to the light, as if to be sure, shut the closet, returned to his study, placed the bottle on a table within reach of his hand, and sat down. He decided to wait an hour, in order to think if he had any important disposition to make before taking leave of life. He thought of Talvanne, and a shadow passed over his countenance.

Talvanne loved him sincerely and with a profound affection, of which he had given marks every hour of his life. Was he, then, going to separate from this faithful companion, without leaving him a proof that he had not forgotten him? What! Not a word, not a souvenir, not a final secret? The idea that Talvanne would reproach his memory for this apparent neglect oppressed Rameau's heart. He arose, and, approaching the bureau, determined to write a farewell note to his friend, when the door suddenly opened and the latter appeared.

They stood and gazed at one another for a moment. Both were pale. Suddenly Talvanne's eyes fell on the little red-labelled bottle. He stepped over, seized it, read the inscription, and, with a cry of astonishment, exclaimed:

"You, Rameau! A man like you, to do that!"

The doctor, without hinting any denial, simply replied:

"I am so unhappy!"

"But what is it all about?" cried Talvanne, in an almost angry tone, for the trouble of the friend whom he loved more than he did himself seemed to him so unjust and cruel.

A dark fire lit up Rameau's eyes.

"What is it all about? You shall know it."

He grasped his friend's hand, and, without adding a word, led him out of the room, through the corridor, up the stairs, and stopped at the door of his dead wife's apartment. He opened the door, and again yielding to an outburst of anger, said:

"Behold the débris of all that I once worshipped! All

is overthrown, torn, sullied, and profaned ! Well, there is less ruin than there is in my heart ; less defilement and profanation than in my mind. You ask me what it is all about ? The treason of a friend, the unfaithfulness of a wife ! All my existence tarnished and dishonored ! That is what it is. Does that seem to you a sufficient cause of shame and pain ? And have I not the right, since these two wretches are dead and no longer suffer, to die, in my turn, and suffer no more ? ”

“ And what assurance have you,” gravely answered Talvanne, “ that you will suffer no more ? Who can prove to you that they do not suffer, and terribly ? And even were you a hundred times more to be pitied, is that any reason why you should give yourself up to folly and despair ? Have you forgotten all the virtue, goodness, and purity that encircles you ? I do not count for anything, any more, then ? And Adrienne ? ”

Rameau frowned, looked downward, but made no reply.

Talvanne continued :

“ This poor little girl, innocent of all your sufferings—why do you hold her responsible for them ? Is that generous ? Is it reasonable ? She has had for you, since the beginning of her existence, only caresses and smiles. And you have thrust her away from you, terrified her, treated her outrageously, even while she supplicated and clung to you. Now she is ill, and you are the cause of it. Rameau, I am deeply, sincerely attached to you. I am very partial whenever you are in question, but I can find no excuse for you in this matter.”

The doctor listened unmoved. He remained obstinately silent.

Talvanne looked at him with alarm, and asked :

“ Have you not heard what I said ? ”

Rameau nodded his head in assent.

“ It is about your daughter I am talking to you,” resumed Talvanne, earnestly. “ Do you understand ? Your daughter ! ”

The doctor raised his head, and in a deep, deliberate tone, repeated:

“My daughter! Are you sure of it?”

Talvanne's face assumed a stern aspect, and he replied in a firm voice:

“If your heart will not yield to my reply, all I can say will not convince you. I will, therefore, change my method of arguing with you. There is a human creature yonder, under your roof, suffering, whom you can relieve, and I ask you if, as a man, you can refuse to appear at her pillow, and, as a physician, you can refuse to treat her?”

Without uttering a word Rameau arose, and, followed by his friend, hastened toward the sick girl's apartment. The door was open, and through the obscurity of the room a lamp, placed on the chimney-piece, flung a ray of light. On hearing the steps of the two men Robert appeared at the door. On seeing Rameau he could not suppress an exclamation of joy, an exclamation familiar to the doctor, and which every one uttered on seeing him come to bring succor and safety to their friends in their dire extremity. The doctor passed by his pupil, who advanced to meet him, pointing, as he passed to the salon, and saying:

“Go in there and wait for me.”

He made Talvanne pass on, and he followed him into the room. Adrienne lay before him, tossing her head on the pillow, as if seeking to find some way of easing her pain. Her half-closed eyes were dull and blank. The pallor of her face accentuated the rigidity of her features, hard and moveless as a mask of marble. Talvanne approached the bed, and pointing to the girl said:

“She seems to suffer greatly. Look at the poor little creature. Is she the same child that we saw yesterday, so fresh, so rosy, so vivacious, with her lovely smiling lips, and eyes radiant with joy?”

“No! She is no longer the same,” replied Rameau in a grave tone.

“It only required an instant,” continued Talvanne, “for

that vigorous health to disappear, and that flower of youth to fade. And all this misfortune and pain that this delicious creature, whom we regarded as the joy of our life, now suffers has been inflicted by you."

"By me!" repeated Rameau gloomily, without protesting against the reproach levelled at him by his friend.

"And you look on her with insensible eyes," continued Talvanne, "you who but yesterday overwhelmed her with your love; you remain moveless and inactive before her, you who would have left everything to run to her, if you were told that the least mishap had occurred to her. If anybody had predicted that you would become so unnatural, would you not have replied that such a thing was impossible?"

"I would, indeed."

"And yet it is so. And you think and reason, and yet persist in your unexpected, cruel, and absurd indifference."

Rameau advanced a step toward the bed, and closely scanned Adrienne's face. He took hold of his friend's arm, pressed it nervously, and pointing to the girl said:

"Study that rounded forehead, those cheek-bones, and that delicately-formed nose. You, a savant, who have made anthropology the study of your life, do you not see here all the distinctive signs of the Spanish race? See how plainly that face shows the mark of its Berber origin. The Moors have passed there, Talvanne, and there is no denying it. Would it not be the head of her mother, feature for feature, if the lower portion did not betray the mixture of the Saxon race? Is not that chin, just a trifle heavy as you see, a clear German type? Examine that head and you will find all the signs that distinguish the subbrachycephalus. Take your measurements, after the method of Camper, or that of the Englishman Morton, or of the Frenchman Broca, and you will find no other solution than that which I indicate, or else your science is but a vain word!"

"And is not that what you have told me a hundred

times?" exclaimed Talvanne in despair. "You never believed in my science. Are you now going, in order to furnish arguments for your injustice, to have recourse to theories that you have always combated? Rameau, take compassion on that child and on yourself. Do not yield to irrational prejudices and foolish suspicions."

Rameau bent his head, and, with a calmness still more crushing than his former anger, replied :

"Do not deny the light. It illumines us, and one must be blind not to see it. The blonde hair and the blue eyes of her for whom you plead with me, are those of Munzel. Look at her!—there, while her features are contracted. Is it not he, just as he was when I attended him, in the little room in the Rue de la Harpe? She resembles him so clearly that I cannot understand how it is that the fact did not strike me sooner. But our wretched species is so credulous! A child! It is so flattering to a man! He believes it is his own, quite naturally, through a stupid pride! Ah! ah! ah!"

He burst into a grim laugh, and pressing his hand on his bosom, as if to restrain the violent pain that was gnawing at his heart, he continued :

"I adored that little girl! You cannot deny that my sole thought was of her during the eighteen years of her existence. You said so a moment ago. She was my passion, my mania. Well! Now the sight of her fills me with horror, and I hate her! She is suffering, and I look on; she is seriously ill, and may, perhaps, die, and I will not lift a finger to save her! She is born of two others, she belongs to two others, and let her now go into the earth with them!"

"Rameau!" exclaimed Talvanne, appalled.

"My good friend," continued the doctor with a chilling coolness, "it would be easy for me to be a hypocrite, and to talk nonsense to you, but such a thing would be unworthy of you and me. I reveal my heart to you as it is; I communicate my thoughts to you without reserve. I am

a monster, perhaps. I do not say I am not. But I cannot be anything else than what I am. I hate that innocent creature, for all the caresses she has stolen from me, and all the kisses I have rapturously imprinted on her odious flesh. For eighteen years I have been a dupe ; that is enough."

"And you do not shudder at the thought that she suffers?"

"Why should I shudder? What bonds unite me to her? There is nothing of me in her. I am sure of it, and so are you. Then, why should my blood or my nerves be stirred? But my mind is indignant and furious. Then what do you ask of me?"

Talvanne wiped away the perspiration that rolled down his forehead. He drew a long breath, and then, with forced resolve, replied :

"I ask your opinion on the malady. Let her be a stranger, if you will—a person wholly indifferent to you, an enemy, even. What does it matter? You have come to her bedside as a favor to me ; examine her, then."

Rameau went over to the bedside. The pallor on his cheeks grew more marked, and his eyes seemed to sink deeper under their beetling brows. His hands trembled. He bent over Adrienne ; he put his face close to hers, and listened to her panting, fitful breathing. His look was serious, but not troubled. He raised the patient's eyelids and examined the eyes ; he took in his hand her round, soft, delicious arm, that was burning with fever. He examined her carefully, minutely, and then slowly stepped aside. He seemed to be calculating the probabilities. Finally he remarked, in a low voice :

"There is at present considerable cerebral inflammation. The meninges are seriously affected ; but what is most to be feared is an intestinal accident on account of the abrupt displacement of the blood. Peritonitis may set in to-morrow. If the peritonitis spreads, there will be grave danger."

And as Talvanne's face showed astonishment rather than fear, Rameau, with the confirmed coolness of an old practitioner, added :

"As to the rest, you may call in whom you choose—Larcher, Sourdain, or Buyot. I approve in advance everything that will be decided on."

"It is a method you adopt to relieve yourself of any interest in the matter," said Talvanne, in a bitter tone.

Rameau made no answer. He opened the door, and, perceiving Robert, who was anxiously awaiting them :

"You can go home, my boy," he said, in a peremptory tone. "You will come back to-morrow to learn the news. There is nothing to fear for the present—so sleep in peace."

And, passing by his pupil, who remained dumfounded at being removed at the moment when he was ready to devote himself body and soul to the necessities of the hour, he gained the corridor, where the sound of his footsteps was soon lost in the darkness. Talvanne, with a violent agitation that he no longer tried to conceal, rushed over to Robert, and, pointing in the direction Rameau had gone, said excitedly :

"Follow him ; go into his cabinet ; and, no matter what he may say, do not leave him until I come to take your place. Go quickly."

He almost pushed him out of the room ; and, seeing the young man obey him without a word, he uttered a sigh of relief. He then brought Rosalie to the sick-room, and left her to watch and attend Adrienne. He took a pen and paper, and began to write a long prescription. While he was writing, the feverish tension that had sustained him for several hours past, subsided ; his nerves relaxed, and all the horror of the situation appeared to him. She who was suffering—she for whom he was ordering these powerful remedies—was the child of his heart, the adorable being to whom he had devoted all his affections, and who filled the last solitary years of his bachelorhood with pleas-

ure and joy. A shadow seemed to pass before his eyes ; he raised his head, and Rosalie, approaching him, said, with an accent of thankfulness :

“You love her?”

“And him also,” answered Talvanne.

And as she shook her head sadly, she added :

“He is suffering—suffering unjustly, and he blames the whole world for that suffering and that injustice. But he will see clearly by-and-by, and all will be changed.”

“May God grant it ! For if everything be not changed, none of us need expect much happiness in the future.”

They exchanged looks. Talvanne and Rosalie understood one another’s meaning at once. And so, never, during all these years, did the old servant, who was so fully acquainted with the cause of the drama that had upset the house, give the slightest indication by word or act that she had penetrated the mystery. She had known all, seen all, concealed all, through her devotion to Conchita and her love for Adrienne.

Talvanne understood that he would have a tireless helper in Rosalie : that she was ready to make every kind of sacrifice. She would attend to the sick girl day and night. This thought afforded him great relief. He could thus devote himself exclusively to the struggle that he wished to wage with Rameau. He asked himself if it was necessary to confide to Robert all or a part of the terrible secret. He knew the young man well enough to be sure that his love would resist the trial, and that nothing could change his heart. Besides, was Adrienne responsible for the wrong that weighed so heavily upon her ? She was the victim of an implacable fatality, and so was the more interesting. He said to himself, “I could adore her for her misfortune alone.”

A smile passed over his lips, and he thought, “No ; I talk foolishly ; I am dramatizing ; I could adore her because she is herself—that is to say, the most charming, beautiful, and attractive creature in the world. Alas ! her

mother was such another. Hence all our misery. These are the women that men cannot help loving."

Another idea now suggested itself to his mind—namely, "What must Robert think of Rameau, apparently out of his senses? What strange suppositions he must entertain! He is too intelligent not to guess that events of the most extraordinary kind are taking place here at this moment. And what causes will he assign for this state of things? How must it strike him to have seen for twenty years a man exhibit the solidity and clearness of mind of Rameau suddenly conduct himself like a madman? Then it would be more prudent to let him know all. He would sincerely pity his patron and respect him all the more. But perhaps it would be best to be guided by events!"

He arose, and, handing to Rosalie the prescription he had written, said :

"Send this to the druggist, and let the bearer wait for the medicine. Meantime, continue the present treatment, and if any change occurs send for me immediately. I shall be down-stairs with the doctor."

He returned to the bedside of the girl, as if he could not force himself to leave it, no matter how imperative the necessity which called him to Rameau. He examined her once more, and found her brow still burning, but her skin more moist. At the same moment she moved and opened her eyes. She tried to fix her vague looks on the face of him she saw standing over her. Her features relaxed, and with a faint smile she asked :

"Is it you, papa?"

"No, darling, it is not your papa," said Talvanne, "but he was here a moment ago."

A troubled, suffering expression overspread Adrienne's face, and in a voice indicative of pain and anguish, she answered :

"Ah! it is you, then. Thanks."

Her voice was so sad, on noticing her father's absence, that Talvanne grew alarmed. It seemed to him that the

girl felt herself abandoned, disowned, condemned, and that the shadow of death already rested on her. He leaned over the bed and whispered :

"He will return, my dear, I promise you. I will tell him that you have asked for him, and he will come back."

She answered feebly :

"Yes, yes. You are so good."

Talvanne felt that if he remained any longer he would be unable to repress his feelings. He softly kissed Adrienne's forehead, and said :

"Try and sleep, my dear."

Her eyes closed, and she made no answer. Talvanne then stepped lightly out of the room, and hurried downstairs to Rameau's cabinet. He was deeply moved, but not afraid, at the thought of the conversation he was about to have with his old friend. For a long time past he was steeled against his violent outbursts of temper, but was not proof against his suffering. And how grievously he suffered now ! That great mind must necessarily suffer more than an ordinary man. All the emotions were increased tenfold by such a sensitive brain. Talvanne, on arriving, had found the doctor wholly prostrated, and intent on suicide. Now, after their harsh discussion, would he find him violent with anger or overcome by prostration ?

He descended the stairs, approached Rameau's cabinet, and heard with uneasiness from the other side of the partition, a strong, loud voice, speaking without interruption, as if delivering a discourse. He felt alarmed. A cold perspiration moistened his forehead. Had his friend lost his senses ? He opened the door abruptly, and he saw the doctor, seated in his arm-chair, separated from his pupil by a large bureau, calm, but pale, and completely master of himself, dictating his comments on a report. He ceased his work when Talvanne entered, as if he felt a joyous pride in exhibiting his old-time energy before his friend who had seen him so feeble a short time before.

Robert, gloomy and troubled, glanced alternately from

Rameau to Talvanne, seeking the solution of the enigma that they did not explain to him. He traced the last words on the paper before him, and putting down his pen, he remained for a moment moveless between the two men, neither of whom spoke a word. Never had he endured such a painful silence. Never did he experience such a sense of uneasiness. Instead of the bonhomie and familiarity that habitually existed between the two friends, a sudden constraint and coolness were now apparent. To what should this sudden change be attributed? Was Adrienne's illness the cause or the result of it? It seemed impossible for him to leave the house, to return home, and to pass the whole night without any explanation of the situation.

At the same moment Rameau arose. Robert understood that he was in the way, and that his master was about to dismiss him for the day. He approached him timidly to bid him good-bye. Rameau, on taking leave of his pupil every day, extended his hand to him in a gracious and affectionate manner, and addressed a few pleasant words to him. Now, he simply bowed his head, and, in a listless voice, said: "Good-evening." The clasp of Talvanne's hand, on the contrary, was warmer and more nervous than usual. Then Robert, saluting his master with the utmost respect, passed out.

The two men, now left alone, sat down facing one another. Talvanne's first glance was directed to the table, on which was placed an hour previously the little red-labelled bottle. It was no longer there. But had the doctor concealed it on his person, or had he put it back in the closet? Had he abandoned his unworthy project, or had he simply postponed it, in order to accomplish it with more leisure and certainty? Rameau seemed to read his friend's thoughts. An ironical smile curled his lip, he knit his brows, and said:

"You are troubled about that little vial of prussic acid that was there a while ago. I am going to banish your

fears : it is in the laboratory. If you had entered half an hour later this evening you would have found me relieved of all my cares. You prevented me from carrying out my resolve, at the moment of my excitement. At present it is all over ; the impulse has subsided. I now view the situation with coolness, and I feel that I have sufficient courage to face it. I had a moment of weakness. Let him who never experienced the same despise me."

Talvanne seized his hand, and pressed it with excessive sensibility. What an immense weight had been lifted from his heart ! Concerned for the father and the daughter at the same time, as troubled for the one as the other, unable to separate them in his affections, he had suffered unspeakable anxiety during the entire evening. And now, at length, he was relieved on the one side. His face was so lit up with pleasure that Rameau was touched, and he said :

"Do not rejoice too much. It would have been better for you, perhaps, if I had gone. You have not had in me a very agreeable companion. What shall it be in the future?"

"Can you talk in that way, even lightly?" Talvanne replied, almost indignantly. "Do you forget that since our youth, I have revolved around you like a modest satellite? My light, and almost my life, I received from you. What would I have been without your friendship? A humble superintendent of a madhouse, a mere care-taker of lunatics ! Whereas you, through your influence, have raised me above the level of mediocrity. You have taken from your own glory to create a reputation for me. You have fashioned an aureole for me from the rays of your own genius. Do you imagine I am not aware of all this? Oh, my old friend, if I were not devoted to you I should be an odious ingrate ! But, in addition to my gratitude, you know full well that I have the most profound affection for you. I have no family, and you have taken its place. You and yours have been my true relatives, all the more loved

as I chose you myself. And you compassionate me for having to continue to live with you? You are afraid that you are disagreeable and unpleasant, when I, with all my heart, thank you for having renounced the intention that would have separated us forever. You see I am a great egoist! Perhaps, you would have been more tranquil and happy, had you taken refuge in death. But I did not think of that. I confess to you sincerely I thought only of myself. If you had left me, what would have become of me?"

Rameau felt his heart, that he believed to be grown icy, dilate in his bosom, on hearing this burst of tenderness, a flush banished the pallor from his cheeks, and his eyes grew mild and sympathetic. He experienced a delightful sensation that proved to him that he was not yet dead to all human sentiment. He said to himself: "Since I am at the mercy of my imagination to such a degree as to share thus keenly another's emotion, I shall have to suffer cruelly still. What, then, must I do to extinguish within me all moral sensibility?"

Thus, at the moment when Talvanne congratulated himself on having reconquered him, Rameau was devising some means of escape from him. But nature, disobedient to his will, held him in subjection, and he found that he was still under the influence of his friend much more than he had imagined. A single word sufficed to prove it to him, by again precipitating him into a more violent passion than ever before. Talvanne, carried away by the fervor of his feelings, imprudently remarked:

"All that you feel since your horrible discovery, I thoroughly comprehend. I have felt it myself, and for a long time, for what was hidden to you was known to me!"

In a second, Rameau was again carried away by the furious current of his exasperated jealousy. Talvanne's remark had suddenly evoked the memory of Munzel and Conchita, and presented them to the mind of him whom they had betrayed, living, happy and smiling. The guilty

pair passed before his mind's eye united, joyous, in a mysterious penumbra, and Rameau's imagination pursued them with his implacable and painful curiosity. He said to his friend:

"And so you knew all about the crime?"

"From the first day."

"And you never informed me of it, never said a word about it, never did anything to save my honor?"

He rose with a menacing air, and hands clenched, as if wishing to crush the guilty lovers, and gave vent to his impotent anger. The images escaped him, he could not lay hands on them.

Talvanne coolly answered:

"Never informed you of it? Why should I? To poison your life twenty years earlier? To play in regard to you the rôle of a loyal and honest Iago? And for what? Was the evil reparable? The pair were, besides, unhappy enough!"

"Unhappy?"

"Yes, for both of them were the victims of a deplorable fatality. They did not seek one another out; they did everything in their power to flee from one another. Still, they loved. And, through the exercise of the virtue that remained to them, they endeavored to conceal their real sentiments from one another, under a feigned hostility. Recollect their embarrassed attitude in each other's presence, their sarcastic language——"

"Hypocrisy! They only wished to hoodwink me!"

"No. They were sincere. For I have had the confession of both of them. You reproached me a moment ago for having done nothing to safeguard your honor. Well, I ran the risk of losing forever the esteem and affection of your wife, on account of the sternness and firmness of my interference. I threatened her with my intention to assault Munzel and force him to fight me, if he did not leave Paris on the spot. Now, when there is no longer any reason to shield either of them, I can tell you the plain, ab-

solute truth. And I swear to you that they were both plunged in the deepest despair."

"Yes, at the thought of being separated from one another!"

"No! For it was Conchita herself who ordered Munzel to depart. They were more afflicted by their guilt, more ashamed of their treason, than they were happy in their love. Remorse poisoned all their joy. And not an hour passed, since the commission of the wrong, that was exempt from the torture that took the place of your vengeance. Finally, you can realize Munzel's real sentiments by remembering that, when about to die, he refused to see his accomplice. Certainly, I never liked him, as you know, and I had a presentiment of the evil that would befall us through him; but I cannot refuse to testify that he bitterly repented the wrong he had committed. He thought only of you, he wished to see no one but you; while your unhappy wife wept, outside the door, kneeling on the floor, proscribed by the dying man, refused admission to his bedside, as if he feared her presence would hinder him from seeking refuge in your friendship, as in an asylum of clemency and forgiveness. Do not regret your inability to be revenged on them; appease your anger, calm your resentment, for they were punished more severely than you could have punished them; and you could not, if they were now living before you, be more implacable toward them than they themselves were to one another!"

Rameau had listened to his friend, his head resting on his hand, without once interrupting him, as if insensible to all that he heard. After a few moments' silence, he began:

"Ah! I could have the generosity to forget them. But have they permitted me to do so? Their crime has not been effaced by their death; it has survived them. Its living trace is in my house, beside me, under my eyes. That is my keenest torture, my incurable wound. That child that I adored, in whom my life was bound up, who was my comfort and my joy, I must now turn away from

with horror. Oh! I cannot express to you my feelings since this terrible revelation. I suffer to the verge of madness. All my thoughts clash furiously within my brain. At times I think that I am a monster to repel that innocent creature. I try to prove to myself that it is impossible that I have changed in such a brief space of time. I loved her this morning, and I hate her this evening. It is the acme of improbability, of insanity, and yet it is so. It required but a second to embitter that tenderness, to ruin that worship. The idol is overthrown, and how can it be restored? I have appealed to my philosophy; I have invoked the rights of humanity. All the principles, in the name of which I have hitherto acted, have proved to be futile and vain. I no longer reason or argue. Mind is vanquished within me; it is the animal that rules, that chafes, that complains, because its offspring that it so loved no longer belongs to it."

"To that I have already replied. What do you know about it?" answered Talvanne. "How can you, a learned physician, a skilful physiologist, advance and defend such a fact? You are very bold! A woman has a lover; does it necessarily follow that the child that is born of her belongs to him? That is an argument only fit for the drama or fiction. A nice invention to produce a situation. But the reality is less simple. This woman had a husband also. Oh! I know I shock your feelings, but let me continue. It is necessary to have the imagination of an inventor, or the blindness of jealousy to affirm that the child does not belong to the husband. Who knows anything about it? And you,—who authorizes you to deny that your daughter is your own? I will not supply you with sentimental reasons. I will not say to you, She is your daughter, and there is not a sensation of her mind or an emotion of her heart but comes from you. No, I will content myself with invoking reason alone; I will take nature as a witness, and I will cry out to you with all the strength of my conviction, You are deceiving yourself, and your

error may prove fatal to that child, to yourself, to Robert, to me—in a word, to all of us who love her !”

“And I will answer,” said Rameau with intense earnestness, “that my conviction is as strong as yours, and that nothing can change it. No ! That child is not mine, and it is only necessary to look at her to be sure of it. Her whole person is a witness of wrong. She is the material and moral emanation of crime. She has all the grace, the elegance, the charm of crime. The most convincing witness against her is herself. She the daughter of an old man and a young woman—she that is like the spring-time in flowers ? Even though the circumstances, the dates did not agree so clearly to prove the contrary, it would be impossible for me to believe that I am her father. Cease, then, treating me as an old fool who only wishes to be convinced ; you are talking to a man who has courage enough to look the truth in the face.”

This time Talvanne understood that it was useless to add another word. Rameau did not complain further ; he had regained his self-possession, and his thoughts were as lucid as his words were clear. He continued :

“I have in my house a stranger on whom the law confers all the rights of a legitimate child. It is the greatest infamy of illicit love to create the difficulty that I now have to solve. How am I to do it ? That is something I do not know as yet, but I am going to reflect on it.”

“Do not have recourse to that extremity,” begged Talvanne. “Spare that innocent creature, if not for her sake, at least for mine. You know how tenderly I love her. And my sentiments toward her have in nowise changed. If you do not wish to see her any more, if her presence near you is insupportable, do not forget that I am ready to devote myself to her happiness. I am her godfather, and I reside almost in the country. That will afford a pretext in the eyes of the world for Adrienne, if your prejudices impose on her a change of residence. You could not induce me to divulge the real cause. It is easy for us

to say that she is ill, weakly, and that she needs a change of air. She can thus wait until the date for her marriage arrives, unless——”

He paused, and his face assumed an anxious expression.

“Unless?” questioned Rameau.

“Unless,” Talvanne continued, in a trembling voice, “unless we have to take her to the cemetery. The events of to-day have seriously shaken her health. I fear complications. A little tenderness and kindness would be the best remedies for her malady, and it is precisely these that you seem determined to withhold from her.”

He looked at his friend and, with a warmth and an emotion which, previous to this misfortune, the latter could not have resisted, resumed :

“Come, Rameau ! I have always known you to be a good and brave man, with a large and generous heart, a powerful and profound mind. Can you not control your human weakness ? Can you not with one sweep of the wing soar upward far above the troubles that fret you, and in a higher, purer element forget all that is not the eternal and sovereign equity ? At this moment you fall, you are not worthy of yourself, and it is from this error on your part that your anger and pain spring. Raise up your head, and resume your place at the head of other men. Be superior in kindness, in goodness, as you are in genius. Adrienne a stranger ? Well, then, if she is, instead of repudiating her, adopt her.”

Rameau shook his head sadly, and replied :

“Formerly, I would have spoken as you do ; I would have given myself up to beautiful extra-philanthropical theories. To-day all is changed. I am no longer in face of an idea, that one may discuss or develop : I run against a fact, and one does not discuss a fact : he submits to it. Perhaps, in my place, you would do what you now advise me to do. That only proves that you are better than I am. I have not the strength to do it, and I firmly believe I never shall, unless by a miracle !”

"Well," said Talvanne, "if a miracle is necessary, God will perform it!"

"God!" repeated Rameau. "The final argument with all of you when you have nothing else to fall back on!"

He added in a tone of weariness:

"Ah! let your God manifest Himself then! I shall be very thankful to Him for it. I have sore need of a star to guide me through the darkness in which I am groping."

"That guide you have already, Rameau," replied Talvanne, "but you do not wish at this moment to follow it. It is your conscience."

He did not give his friend time to answer, desiring to leave him under the influence of his last words. He shook his hand warmly, said "To-morrow," received the "Yes," in reply, as an engagement, and left the room.

In the dark ante-chamber a shadow glided from the wall and came toward him. It was Robert.

"What! you have waited all this time for me?" he said to the young man.

"I went back to Adrienne, and made her take the medicine you prescribed. The fever has subsided somewhat, but her head still troubles her as before."

"Let us await the effect of the night."

He took Robert by the arm, and leaning on him, said:

"Why did you lie in wait for me in this way?"

The latter, embarrassed, did not reply.

"Come!" resumed Talvanne. "Have the courage of your curiosity."

"Well, then," replied the young man, in a faltering voice, "I desire to learn from you what has taken place to-day. I wish to know what troubles the doctor so seriously, and what has caused Adrienne's illness."

They were now outside the door, and Talvanne's coupé was awaiting them before the gate.

"We will walk a little," said Talvanne to the coachman.

And while the carriage followed them they proceeded on through the Place des Invalides. Robert studied Tal-

vanne's face closely. The latter stopped abruptly, looked his companion fixedly in the face, and said :

"If Adrienne was not Rameau's daughter, what would you say?"

Those who love have a sort of divination. One could have believed that Robert had a presentiment of what Talvanne was prepared to ask him. He replied quickly, as if his heart had the answer ready :

"What matters it to me whether she is the daughter of Peter or Paul, an orphan or an heiress? So long as she is herself, I am satisfied. I love her!"

Talvanne's face beamed with joy. He shook the young man's hand with a heartiness all his own, and exclaimed :

"Well! well! It takes lovers to express their thoughts frankly. You are a worthy young man, whom I esteemed highly yesterday, but whom I esteem much more highly to-day. Now, listen to me, and I will explain the mystery to you."

The night was soft, a light breeze rustled the leaves of the trees, and thousands of stars, cold and luminous, scintillated in the heavens. Talvanne cast a pensive glance heavenward, and murmured :

"And Rameau wishes for a star. It is not the star that is lacking, alas! but the eyes to see it!"

He hastened his step, reached the quay, the carriage meantime following, and finally began the recital of the story that he had promised to Robert.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

THREE physicians had met in Rameau's cabinet in consultation. They were, all three, among the most celebrated practitioners of Europe. Talvanne, leaning against the chimney-piece, a few paces from his friend's arm-chair, was listening to the conclusions of Professor Lemarchand, a specialist in chest diseases, and the discoverer of the bacillus in phthisical diseases. The professor, who was standing, was speaking in a slow, deliberate voice, with subdued gestures, addressing himself alternately to his confrères, for corroboration, and to the father, to implore his indulgence.

"My dear friend, we do not know what to think. The malady puzzles us. The symptoms are extremely diverse. Yesterday there was distinct hematocele, accompanied by peritonitis. To-day, there is no longer a trace of inflammation in the abdomen, and the fever augments, with troubles of sight and hearing. Meantime, cerebral symptoms are appearing, and Talvanne persists in fearing meningitis."

The three physicians looked at one another with anxiety. They pondered every means of escaping from the darkness in which they were struggling; they inwardly sighed, but remained silent. Their faces wore gloomy and disappointed looks. They felt themselves powerless, and in presence of their colleague and friend, whose daughter, committed to their care, suffered from a malady that they could not define, and which grew worse from hour to hour, they experienced a feeling of humiliation. To let a common patient die would be endurable. But the only child of Professor Rameau! That would be a confession of incapacity that would humiliate the entire Faculty.

"The malady puzzles you," broke in Talvanne, "because its seat is in the mind. You have to combat an affection produced by mental commotion, by a violent shock. Do

not hope to dissipate it by ordinary therapeutic means. No cupping such as our confrère proposed a while ago. The loss of blood would dangerously weaken the patient. No cold baths ; there is not a trace of typhoid fever. Anodynes, rest ; in a word, the least medicine possible."

They all looked at one another, and keenly felt the irony of Talvanne's remarks. But Rameau, buried in his arm-chair, did not move a muscle. They arose, and shaking his hand, said :

"Let us await the development of the disease. We shall return in the morning."

And, like so many shadows, they glided out of the room, leaving Rameau and Talvanne together.

"And that is the élite of modern medical science !" remarked Talvanne, shrugging his shoulders. "Poor humanity, which is subject to such pretentious nincompoops ! Their patients recover because they desire to recover. That reminds me of what poor Dr. Bouvey once told me, when I was one of his pupils at Saint-Louis : 'In my department I have two wards filled with patients. Those in the first I treat according to the practice and teaching of the college. To those in the second I give simply sugared water. As many of the latter recover as the former.' He was frank, he did not drug his patients."

He walked over from the window to where his friend was sitting, planted himself before him, and, changing his tone, said :

"I know well our patient's needs, and what will cure her better than all their remedies."

He paused, and, looking straight in Rameau's face, continued :

"It is your presence."

And, as the doctor remained motionless and silent, he continued, in a supplicating tone :

"You do not wish to come up-stairs with me to see her?"

The doctor shook his head. Talvanne's face darkened.

and his look grew introspective ; he remained absorbed for several minutes, and then began :

“ You should do it, if it were only as a matter of professional pride. You see plainly that all these great physicians, your rivals, so jealous of you, are not able to formulate a certain diagnosis. They are groping in the dark. If it had been anybody other than Adrienne, and if I had not opposed it in the present case, they would already have attempted methods of treatment that would have tortured the child beyond endurance. If you will but take the case in hand, you will not only discover what they cannot see, but also apply the true remedy and method of treatment. What a lesson to give them, and in your own house ! Rameau, I beg you to come.”

The doctor hung his head on his breast to avoid Talvanne's look, and made no reply. Talvanne made a gesture of disappointment.

“ *Mon Dieu !* ” he exclaimed, “ I use every means with you, even artifice, and still you remain immovable. What then can I say that may move you to pity ? You esteem and love me, however, as also Robert, who is almost beside himself, and who will die of grief if we do not save Adrienne. I assure you that nobody but you can save her. All the rest of us are imbeciles. Is it possible that we have here the only physician living who can succeed in saving her so dear to us, and that he refuses to us what he has so often accorded to strangers for money ? But is it really hatred that devours your heart ? You told me so, but I did not wish to believe it. ‘ Angry phrases, words uttered in the heat of the moment, I said to myself, he will yield by and by. ’ And yet you remain hard and cold as a stone ! Are you not, then, of our species ? Is there nothing human about you ? You alarm me, though I have passed all my life near you, and have known your greatness and your goodness. Come, my dear and good old friend, if you will but accompany me to her room ; if you will see her again, were it only for a second, you will take pity on her, I as-

sure you. Our colleagues were touched to the heart, and they do not know her at all! They do not know how sweet, how gentle, how tender she is! A child that has always been our joy, whose every breath we listened to when she was young, so careful were we of her! and you are going to let her die now? For, I tell you she will die, and on your account! Do you understand? She asks, she calls for no one but you! When she wakes up from her horrible sleep, and regains her reason, she looks for you; and it is the chagrin and pain of not seeing you near her that throws her back into delirium. You are killing her! If you wish to get rid of her, you have taken the best means to accomplish your purpose! She will not long resist your harshness. In a few days at most it will be finished! Rameau, you understand me well—do you not? Finished! We will nail her in her coffin, and consign her to the earth. Then you and I will be alone. But, ah, not together! For, I tell you now, I will shun you, like a monster. You will only inspire me with horror. I certainly will not live with a murderer. And you will be a murderer!”

He sank into his chair, overcome, pale, almost breathless, beside Rameau. The doctor really appeared to have lost all human feelings and traits, as his friend had reproachfully remarked a moment before. His forehead, yellow as ivory, shone bright in the light of the lamp; his white beard covered his breast like a silver cloth, and his eyelids, swollen from insomnia, were lowered, as if he was sleeping. His hands alone, resting on the arms of his chair, twitched nervously, indicating a violent mental emotion.

“Rameau, do you hear me?” resumed Talvanne. “Answer me, at least.”

“I have left you master of my own house,” replied the doctor, without raising his eyes, or without his face losing anything of its coldness and rigidity. “Do what you please; call in whom you please. Decide, command. But do not ask anything more of me. You compelled me to

live, and I told you that you were wrong. You see now you almost regret it."

Talvanne slapped his hands together, and, with an irritation he did not try to restrain, said :

"I no longer recognize you ! In thought or language, you are yourself no more. Can a man change thus in so short a time ? I must say that you are playing a horrible rôle. I ask you, for the last time, to yield to my prayer. Will you do me the favor of showing a spark of pity for that poor child ?"

Rameau replied :

"Do not require of me what I have not the strength to do."

Talvanne arose before his friend, pale, and, with an accent that betrayed his heartfelt sorrow and disappointment, exclaimed :

"You are a bad man ! Yes, a bad man ! You will never see me enter your house again. Good-bye !"

And he went out without even looking behind him. Rameau did not move a muscle or speak a word to retain the friend of his former years. But when the door was closed he uttered a long-drawn sigh.

Talvanne, exasperated, rushed up the stairs in a few bounds. He seemed to have regained the agility of youth. One would think that he was running with the announcement of happy news. On reaching the door of Adrienne's room he stopped. His nervous excitement suddenly subsided, and the horror of the situation appeared to him. Rameau refused to do personally anything whatever for her whom he had banished from his heart in an instant, and forever. And he, Talvanne, had undertaken to bring him back to the bedside of the patient. As he had said to his friend, the girl thought only of her father, looked only for her father, asked only for her father. She was dying from the thought of having been thrust away by him. The wound whose ravages the physicians attested without being able to assign its cause had been made by

the cruel hand of Rameau, and the wound was in the heart. The father only could bind that wound and heal it. And he did not wish to do so.

Then it was all over, and the poor little girl, the innocent victim of another's wrong, was destined to die, in the agony of an ever-increasing delirium, and the tortures of a brain-burning fever. What was Talvanne to answer, when the patient would ask him the same question, that she did not fail to repeat from the first hour: "Why does papa not come?" He should have recourse to falsehood again, as he had during the past two days.

He almost wished that the girl would be lost in that torpid sleep, haunted by frightful nightmares, that made her supplicate and cry out, as if she were confronted by threatening figures, as if she were surrounded by scenes of violence. The past scene was continually before her mind—a chamber covered with débris, and Rameau violent, terrible, furious—and wrung from her the anguished cry, ever the same:

"Papa! oh, papa, pardon me. If you are troubled, it is not my fault. Papa, do not harm me!"

And she prayed so sweetly, so piteously, that Talvanne, listening to her, could not restrain his feelings, while Robert chafed with anger and pain, in his exasperating impotence.

To take on themselves the sufferings of this adorable creature, to sacrifice themselves for her, to die if necessary that she might live, this both of them would, if possible, have done without an instant's hesitation. And they were powerless. While a man who, by a single sign, a word, could save that martyred innocent, refused with fierce obstinacy to make that sign, to speak that word, immovable, icy, petrified, in an exaggerated folly that had dried up his heart and brain.

And there was nothing that could be done with him that Talvanne had not already tried. No reasoning, no entreaty, no violence would avail. One might take a pistol,

and, placing it to his head, say: "Save her or I will slay you!" and he would reply, "My blessing on you. Kill me; it is all that I desire!" Nothing, nothing remained. The entire arsenal of human means had been exhausted. It only remained to have recourse to Providence, and rely on nature.

Almost beside himself, ready for anything, so intense was his suffering, Talvanne nevertheless did not despair. He did not know whence succor would come, but he expected it. The miracle of which he spoke to Rameau would occur. A lightning-stroke of feeling would reopen in that heart the fountain of goodness now dried up. It was impossible that something should not happen. Adrienne was not yet dead.

But she was dying, and he vividly recalled the prediction, already partly realized, that Conchita made beside Munzel's death-bed:

"All who have come near the atheist have been stricken. He has corrupted all around him with his deadly poison!"

All had succumbed, as she had said, and now it was Adrienne's turn. He imagined he saw the young wife once more, in her deep-mourning robe, with arm raised, and with the fire of a prophetess in her eyes. But he shook his head, and banished these thoughts. He found himself, to his surprise, in the corridor, at the head of the stairs, in front of the salon, in almost complete darkness. He had been there, perhaps, for half an hour. He entered Adrienne's chamber on tip-toe. On seeing him, Robert, who was seated by the mantel, rose and cast a questioning glance at Talvanne.

"It is impossible to move him," replied the latter.

"What if I should go?" asked the young man.

"It would, I think, be useless. Let us reserve the final effort for the last extremity. After what I compelled him to listen to, what could you say that would have any effect on him? No! The blow that has fallen on him has broken all the ties that bound him to us. We are no longer

dealing with a man. He is no longer touched by our misery. He no longer hears or understands our human arguments. I am prostrated. I never dreamed that my old age was reserved for such a cruel trial. But how is Adrienne?"

"She complains of violent pains in the head, and the light affects her eyes. She cannot bear it."

"Does she still have hallucinations?"

"Yes, during sleep. On awaking, always the same thought."

"Her father?"

"Yes. See, it is eight o'clock. You have passed these two nights with her, and you ought to go home and rest. I will sit with Rosalie and attend to her."

"Very well; but I shall remain until midnight."

He approached the bed. Adrienne was breathing painfully, and murmuring vague and dreamy words. Talvanne bent over her, and his eyes growing accustomed to the light, gradually distinguished the features of the girl, ravaged by suffering and pain. Not a trace of that rosy freshness, which lent such beauty to her face, now remained. A marble paleness overspread her cheeks, and her jaws seemed pinched and emaciated. Her temples were moist with perspiration. She was restless and feverish.

Talvanne shook his head, uttered a sigh, and returning sat down beside Robert. They remained, for a time, silent, listening to the monotonous tick-tack of the clock. About half-past eight o'clock the door softly opened, and Rosalie appeared. She stepped over to the two men, and whispered to them to go to dinner in the salon.

"It is the doctor's dinner," she said, "but he would not touch it."

And, as Talvanne and Robert did not move, she added:

"You must renew your strength; you have need of it."

They rose, and, preceded by Rosalie, passed into the salon, where, on a small round-table, the dinner was awaiting them.

They sat facing one another, sad and troubled, in that house where they had so often dined in gaiety and happiness.

Rameau had remained in his cabinet, never moving from his chair since Talvanne's departure. He no longer seemed alive. Sunk back in his huge chair, he was wrapped in profound reflection. Rosalie came several times to ask him to eat. She even brought in a little table, and placed it within reach of his hand. He only looked at her with an impatient frown, and said, "Take that away," and relapsed into his stormy meditation. Dressed in his long, black gown, in the midst of his books, pensive and bowed, he resembled old Faust seeking to penetrate the mysterious problems of human existence.

For two days and nights he had not closed his eyes in sleep and, his mind still lucid and active, it seemed to him he would never need sleep more. He had gladly calculated that the remainder of his life would be consumed all the quicker by this enervation, and, with eager application, he again turned his mind to the contemplation of his misfortune. Gradually, his thoughts soared above the earth, until he had lost the sentiment of the real.

He felt himself borne into immense space, as if he were a disembodied and aerial being. Everything around him disappeared, and he ascended continually, lifted on powerful wings. He was thus elevated into the celestial solitudes, where the poets have placed the souls of the dead, and, like Francesca and Paolo, entwined in an eternal and deadly embrace, he saw Munzel and Conchita, plaintive and desolate, attached to one another by the remorse of their crime. He could not turn his eyes away from them, and a terrible grief oppressed him. He wished to rejoin them, but the distance between them and him ever remained the same. He chafed to pursue them, but they fled aghast into the solitary immensity, leaving a long, black, funereal veil trailing behind them. But there was no fatigue and no truce. It seemed to him that he would pursue them

forever, with the vengeful desire to overtake them, judge them, and punish them.

Hours went by, and he still remained a prey to his redoubtable folly. He forgot life, the world, his friends, and, lost in his dream, he only existed in his thoughts. Rosalie entered his room, and he did not hear her. She spoke to him, beseeching him to retire to sleep, not to remain seated continually in the same spot, but he made her no answer. The house gradually grew silent and dark as a tomb. Talvanne was gone, the night glided away, and, in the light of the lamps that were beginning to grow dim, Rameau dreamed on, his eyes fixed on space, his brow burdened with thought. The clock struck two. A cold feeling, the first vital impression that the gloomy dreamer had experienced for eight-and-forty hours, came over him. He cast an anxious glance about him, saw the fire extinguished, the room deserted, and darkness all around. The memory of his present troubles came back to him. He saw again the white chamber in which Adrienne lay suffering, dying, and a piercing pain went through his heart like an arrow. He thought that he was not alone in his suffering, and that he had plunged into a state of voluntary annihilation, which was only the effect of a monstrous egoism. But a wave of anger again passed through his mind. He revolted against the pity that had dared to appeal to his heart. He would not admit that any suffering was equal to his own. What cared he about others? What bond did human weakness now counsel him to renew? Those of the ignominy of which he was the victim? No! No! He would not be such a coward!

He rose and walked the room with a slow and heavy step. All was quiet. He was isolated, alone, materially as well as morally. The void that he had spread around him, by his violence and his harshness, remained complete. He felt himself as much abandoned as he had abandoned others. Had not Talvanne himself said that he would return no more? Talvanne! Was it possible? And what

would Rameau's last hour be without his faithful friend to close his eyes in death? Alone, like a voluntary pariah,—was not that what he wished?

He walked slowly to the door of his cabinet and opened it. He went on without any light; all the corners of the house were familiar to him. His feet found the way without any aid from his eyes. He passed through the corridor and reached the stairway that led to Adrienne's apartment. The silence was unbroken. Not a step, no going in or out was heard on the upper floor, revealing attendance upon the patient. Was she also abandoned? A tremor passed through Rameau's veins as he thought, "Is it all over? Is she dead?"

He began to climb the stairs in the darkness. He ascended, drawn by a curiosity that he could not subdue. Before whom was he going to present himself? What was he going to see? People crushed with sorrow and trouble? A body, frail and pallid, stretched on a bed surrounded by funereal lights? And sighs and prayers and tears? He continued to ascend. He reached the salon, which was open; he entered, and through the half-open door he saw a thin ray of light, and he heard a voice that sounded like a subdued chant. He advanced a step, leaned his head over to the door, and looked in.

Robert was seated near the bed, almost under the curtains, in the feeble and flickering light of a night-lamp. It was he who was speaking, and she whom he was addressing did not hear him. She was still plunged in that same terrible delirium, which ceased, at short intervals, only to leave her more prostrate than before, with her life slowly but surely ebbing away. And to arouse her from that sleep that seemed to be the herald of death, her fiancé talked to her, entreated her, with an ardent and disconsolate tenderness. In the darkness, amid the unbroken silence, it was a spectacle at once touching and sinister to see Robert thus striving to awaken the half-lifeless body before him through the magic words of love. Rameau

listened with eager ear. Certain of being alone, as Talvanne was gone, Rosalie sleeping, and the father obstinately shut up in his hateful abstention, Robert, bent over the inert hand of Adrienne, gave free vent to his feelings.

“Is it possible,” he murmured, “that we must lose you—you so sweet, so good, so tender? What will our life be when you will be no longer here? What regrets, what despair for those who will have left you to perish! They will then realize the void made by your absence; they will wish to recall you to life, to have you back again, but you will no longer hear them. It will be too late! However, it only requires a glimmer of reason to penetrate his inexplicable madness in order to save you. If he whom you call unceasingly, when you are not insensible, as you are at this moment, should consent to come, should forget the wrongs for which you are not responsible, to think only of your beauty and goodness, you would live, for you suffer only through his anger, and you will die only through his abandonment. And I am condemned to witness this injustice, to bear this iniquity, and I can do nothing for you. You love me, but the love you bear him who is giving you over to death is stronger still! Darling, your hand is burning with a fever that I cannot allay. Do you hear me? Awaken; do not remain there continually, murmuring words that we can all divine. Your father will come. Yes, I will beseech him on my knees. Your godfather did not know how to talk to him. He was violent and harsh. That was not the way to take the doctor. He would not have resisted a tender appeal. And I will melt his heart, else there is no heart in his breast. Oh! dearest Adrienne, what would I not attempt to procure you relief? It is such a torture for me to see you suffer, without the power of helping you. I would sacrifice my life to save you. To hate you? For an act of folly that occurred years ago! If to-morrow, cured, strong, happy, you should abandon me in favor of another, I would not even think of doing you harm. I would die of pain and despair, that would be

all, in wishing you happiness and joy. To hate you? Can such a thing be possible? A temporary madness. Do not leave us; be patient, wait; he will return and you will suffer no more, and we shall see only gaiety in your eyes, and a smile on your lips."

He pressed the girl's hand in his as if he wished to assume her suffering and give her his health and strength. He felt that hand tremble in his own; he arose and saw Adrienne open her eyes. She turned toward him, with an effort, and, recognizing her friend, said:

"It is you, Robert! My godfather is no longer here!"

She paused a moment, and then feebly continued:

"And where is papa? I would like to see him."

"He was here a while ago, my darling, but you were sleeping," replied Robert.

She smiled sadly, and said:

"Yes, he always comes when I am asleep. You tell me so. But I never find him here when I awake."

She was silent for a few seconds, and then in a piteous voice said:

"And that hurts me so much! so much!"

Her eyes grew clouded, her head fell back on the pillow, she murmured a few indistinct words, and relapsed into delirium. Robert bent over her, still holding her hand, and looking the picture of despair. The doctor, more bowed, gloomy, and unhappy in mind than ever, almost frightened, and flying from this picture of anguish and pain into the darkness like a criminal, descended the stairs again with the same noiseless step and re-entered his room. He walked up and down the apartment, deeply agitated. His mind had taken another turn. It no longer evoked the images of Conchita and Munzel. The guilty couple had vanished, and the little suffering girl, who was materially so near him and morally so far from him, now occupied his thoughts. He saw the white chamber, and, beneath the curtains that had so often sheltered the peaceful and smiling sleep of the child, he heard the fitful breathing

of a painful and troubled sleep. It was the same sweet creature, so tenderly loved, whose kisses used to touch his heart, who was now suffering, and he did not attempt to cure her.

He tried to debate with himself, saying, "What is that girl to me? I do not know her. If it were not for the explanations I should have to make, from which I shrink, I would have turned her out of my house. I do not love her. I cannot love her. It would be only a deception added to so many others. To love the offspring of that miserable wretch and her paramour? To accept and approve shame? Ah! I should have fallen into imbecility to do that. Come, no weakness! I have been dishonored by others, but I shall never dishonor myself!"

A voice arose within him for the first time, which answered, "Who will know it? Talvanne? But he has implored you to be merciful. Robert? He will bless you all his life." But he immediately rebelled against this cowardly counsellor; he protested that he would not follow its treacherous and alluring promptings. He wished to steel himself more completely with indifference, but he did not succeed in doing so. In vain he tried to turn his thoughts to other things, to direct his imagination to different subjects; he was always brought back to that lamentable picture of the suffering girl, burning with feverish nightmares in that bed that was intended for happy dreams.

The scene grew more vivid in his mind. He experienced an intense desire to know what was taking place. He was about to ring to ask for news. Yet his heart was not moved by a return of sympathy; he did not feel himself drawn toward the girl. It seemed to him that, once cured, he would take no further interest in her. But she was suffering and he said to himself, "I think of her only because she suffers." He experienced a relief when he found this explanation of his trouble. As the morning was breaking, he threw open the window and sat down in his arm-chair,

The pure air did him good. After a while he went to his desk, took a book, and read tranquilly until breakfast-time.

Rosalie, to her great astonishment, found him as calm as if nothing unusual had happened. She had counted on a prostration of his nervous system consequent on his past excitement to bring about a change in his mind. And suddenly, at the moment when she believed him prostrated and at the mercy of his surroundings, he rose up as strong and powerful as ever. She asked herself what pact he had made with the invisible beings to possess these mysterious resources. She brought on a tray his usual meal—cold meat and fruits. He ate a few mouthfuls and drank a glass of water. He had hardly finished when Rosalie turned to leave. As she reached the door he could no longer contain the question that was burning his lips.

“Is Dr. Talvanne there?” he asked.

She answered :

“Yes, sir ; he is up-stairs with Robert.”

She did not mention the name of Adrienne ; she did not say, “With your daughter.” “Up-stairs”—that was all. Was not that what he wished to know ? She was tempted to add, “And things are serious.” But she restrained herself. Rameau’s face was contracted, and from pale turned livid. He made a gesture of impatience, and Rosalie left the room.

So Talvanne had executed his threat ; he did not return to his friend any more. He was with his godchild up-stairs ; but he did not stop on the first floor to shake the hand of his old friend and comrade. It was the first time he had done so in forty years. Rameau was deeply grieved. He had listened to all Talvanne had said to him, but he did not believe in his threat to sever his friendship with him.

He said to himself, “At present I am, indeed, alone. It is a complete and positive void.”

Everything around him was solitary and desolate. A painful impression took possession of his mind. He

seemed to be taken with vertigo, and with a troubled thought he asked himself if the sentiment he felt did not spring from fear. An unknown oppression weighed upon his heart. He was dissatisfied with others and with himself. A heavy burden bore him down, and he had a suspicion that it was remorse. He grew indignant at the thought. Remorse for what? What had he done? Was he, then, guilty? He smiled bitterly. Poor humanity, tossed about forever on the ocean of dreams, and terrified by the reality! Weakness, weakness, and nothing but weakness! A change in his life, a modification of his habits, and he, the strong-minded, lost the balance of his faculties. Talvanne upbraided him, and that momentary hostility caused a depression of spirits, the inquietude of a child who fears spectres. All this sadness, all this melancholy, were only phantoms of the imagination. It would be only necessary to look at them closely in order to dissipate and annihilate them.

He endeavored during the long hours of that day to morally fortify himself. He set about it with great will and courage. He succeeded after violent efforts. He was able to pass his examination of conscience, and to judge himself as innocent toward others as they had been guilty toward him. He counted on the natural justice of Talvanne, and hoped that his friend would return to him. He regained all his firmness, and concluded that he had acted as he should have acted. He received his confrères who arrived for the daily consultation, and did not appear to remark that the alienist had not accompanied them. He talked medicine, discussed the treatment proposed, accepted the encouragement that they gave him, and played with grim complaisance his rôle of father. But, toward six o'clock, when night was falling and darkness taking the place of day, he was once more seized with uneasiness. He could not rest quiet, and he began to walk the room in an agitated manner. He rang for a light, and, as Rosalie prepared his lamp, he asked for the second time :

“Is Dr. Talvanne there?”

Rosalie looked at him astonished, and in a reproachful tone replied :

“Oh, he has been up-stairs, without once leaving, since morning !”

Always “up-stairs”—not with mademoiselle, as she formerly used to say ceremoniously, or familiarly—with Adrienne. Rameau stopped before Rosalie, and, looking, saw the tears running down her cheeks. He asked in a trembling voice :

“Has it grown worse?”

At these words Rosalie burst out in tearful emotion

“Oh, monsieur, monsieur ! The darling that we brought up in down and feathers ! A princess could not have been more petted and cared for ! And to see her now going off so miserably ! *Mon Dieu !* and must we now lose her, as we have already lost her mother !”

On hearing these words Rameau remembered that it was on her who was weeping there before him he had imposed the duty of accompanying Conchita to Munzel's. He no longer saw in her the faithful servant, trembling for the life of the beloved child, but the complaisant accomplice of the guilty wife. He cast a withering glance at her, and, in a cutting tone, said :

“You who conducted the mother to her lover, know full well that that girl is not my daughter. What comedy are you playing, in order to excite my pity ? You were like the others. You knew it all, did you not ?”

“By my hope of eternal salvation, I never knew anything about it until the poor madame confessed it all to me on her death-bed. I would have given my life that such a thing had never been !”

“Hypocrisy and lies !” exclaimed Rameau. “Go out of here !”

She drew back, frightened, and, clasping her hands together, cried out :

“But the poor innocent little darling !”

Rameau angrily replied :

“It is people like you who keep me away from her. Go on out of here !”

Rosalie did not dare to utter a word in reply, but retired as hastily as possible.

When Rameau was once more alone the tumultuous beating of his heart alarmed him. He believed that he had once more become master of himself. An inopportune word, an untimely request, and he was again precipitated into a violent passion. And against whom? Against the woman whose untiring devotion he had been enabled to appreciate for the past five-and-twenty years. Was she responsible for a misfortune that she was not able to prevent? Oh, she did not utter a falsehood!—he knew it.

He relapsed into his melancholy mood on finding himself so unarmed and feeble.

A servant brought him his dinner, but he did not touch it. It was all over with his superiority of mind, which placed him above all compromise. In an instant he became a man again, like to his fellow-men, at the mercy of the heat of his blood and the sensibility of his nerves. He remained gloomy, with bowed head, revolving troublous thoughts in his mind. He felt himself very weak, since he had no longer to fear the attacks of Talvanne. His last outbreak had been provoked by the intervention of Rosalie. Pushed into his last intrenchments, he defended himself with energy. Relegated to solitude and silence, his resistance collapsed. He was strong against others, not against himself.

As on the night before, the desire of knowing what was taking place in the house presented itself invincibly to his mind. The picture of the poor sick girl, with Robert watching beside her, entreating her not to die, again rose clear before him, and the insidious voice that had already whispered in his ear made itself heard once more : “Satisfy your desire, then. Leave this room, go and find out the situation ; who will know it?” Always that hypocrit-

ical counsellor that urged him on to cowardice ! He grew indignant, and as if addressing some present, though invisible being, exclaimed aloud :

“I will not go !”

The hours glided by. He heard midnight sound. The silence around him was complete. The vehicles had ceased to roll on the streets. Not a sound, not a breath—solitude. One might have thought that an order had been given, so that the passage would be free to him, if he wished to ascend to the sick-room. He opened his window. His brow was burning. The pale and pure moon silvered with its light the trees in the garden. A nightingale was singing in the lilacs, and the trills of the winged wooer made such salient contrast with the sepulchral sadness that encircled Rameau, that it seemed to him the bird was singing on a tomb. He did not wish to hear it longer, and he shut down the window.

Hesitating still, he paced the room, tortured by the desire to go up-stairs. Then he left the room abruptly. He followed the corridor in the darkness, ascended the stairs, reached the upper floor, noiselessly entered the salon, and saw the door of the room half open, as the night before. He heard a voice. He approached. A man was seated by the lamp, in an arm-chair, but it was not Robert ; it was Talvanne. The old man, fatigued by his watching, and broken with emotion, could not conquer his lassitude, and had fallen asleep. The words that were heard were spoken by the patient in her incurable delirium, complaining as usual, and more emaciated, pale, and feverish than ever.

Rameau entered the door of the chamber on tip-toe, as if he were a thief. He went over to the bed, and, standing beside the girl, looked in her face. The ravages of the disease appeared terrible to him, betraying a profound weakening of the system, and presaging approaching dissolution. Her eyes were closed, and he did not see their blue color, that would recall his infamous friend. Her blonde hair was obscured in the darkness, and he did

not see its golden glow to remind him of his wrong. He only discerned the suffering mouth, whose lips, between kisses, had spoken so many tender words to him. He saw only the little hands, feverish and trembling, that had so often caressed him. He shuddered with regret, with pain and anxiety. That pale brow tempted his lips, he wished to kiss it as formerly, but the thought, meantime, filled him with horror. He stood like a statue of distress. Oh! the agony, the malediction, of not being able to fall on his knees before that bed of suffering, of not having the right to encircle it with his arms, as with a living barrier against death. Oh! the wretches, who had poisoned his heart, sullied his mind, destroyed his confidence, and dug that abyss of shame and repugnance between him and the child that he adored! A wave of anger mounted to Rameau's lips, and there, in presence of their dying child, he summoned the guilty pair to witness their infamy.

Suddenly a tremor ran through his veins. A voice had spoken, saying, with an accent of inexpressible joy :

"Oh! papa! it is you! at last!"

Wholly overcome, Rameau wished to step backward, but the little trembling hand had seized him, and he felt its feverish warmth on his own. He saw Adrienne's looks fixed on his. But he could not see if the eyes were blue even now, for they were overflowed with tears. He strove again to withdraw, but the voice was raised once more in touching accents :

"Oh! papa! I beg of you not to leave me!"

He stopped, motionless, overwhelmed; his feet almost sank under him. The voice was again heard, but in more feeble tones, and it seemed to Rameau to be that of the Adrienne of long ago, when she was as yet quite little, was his daughter still, as they watched over her in her infantile illnesses.

"Oh! papa, I am sick, so sick! And neither Talvanne nor Robert nor your other friends can do anything for me. You! oh! you! if you love me as before——"

She raised herself on her elbow, and with a piteous expression, continued :

“I do not wish to leave you, I want to live ! Oh ! papa, you have always saved all your patients, are you going to let me, your own child, die now ?”

Rameau could resist no longer. He bent down on the bed, and lifting the helpless girl in his arms, pressed her to his bosom, and kissed her feverish lips and brow over and over again, as he answered in tremulous accents :

“No ! no ! my darling, my only object of adoration on earth. You will not die. You will live to comfort me, to console me, and to love me !”

She said softly :

“Oh ! you are yourself now. I have found you again—you are yourself. You must not let me sleep any more, for I have terrible dreams, in which you seem to thrust me away from you, and threaten to hurt me.”

“Do not fear any longer. You will sleep, but only to make you well all the sooner.”

He was standing erect, straightening his tall form, seeming to defy death, just as he had so often appeared at the pillow of the sick. Adrienne smiled on him. He placed his hand on her forehead, and in a moment, calm, with features relaxed, as if a sovereign will had commanded her malady to subside, she lay back peaceful and contented on her pillow.

He gazed at her for an instant with a calm delight, and then, turning around, he found himself face to face with Talvanne, who had been watching him for some moments. Rameau raised his finger to command silence. Then the alienist approached his friend, and, clasping him in his arms, embraced him in an access of delight. The two men remained face to face, their hands joined, their countenances illumined with joy. At last, leading the doctor into the salon, Talvanne, with laughing eyes and joyous heart, whispered in his ear :

“I think I am entitled to go to bed and have a rest now.”

Rameau bowed his head, and answered in a low voice : "Until to-morrow," and taking leave of his friend went back and sat down beside Adrienne.

CHAPTER XII.

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS.

TALVANNE, who was accustomed to make so light of his medical knowledge, proved himself an eminent physician, when he declared to his illustrious confrères that the malady from which Adrienne suffered had its seat in the mind, and that it was not to be combated by ordinary means. From the moment that Rameau took his place beside her pillow, Adrienne, who, theretofore, seemed to offer no resistance to the malady, seemed to grow attached to life, and in a few days was out of danger. Under the eye of her father, she revived, like a chilly plant under the rays of the sun. She was now convalescent, very pale, still weak from the violent fever, but rapturously enjoying her restoration to life.

So long as she had been in danger, Rameau not leave her, attending to her with that natural perception that had won him his universal renown. Following the disease step by step, he controlled it, and anticipated the crises, so as to combat them before they had time to develop. He thus restored to the girl's health its regularity, for a time so gravely disturbed, and he joyously saw her emerge from that dangerous ordeal, more vigorous than before.

Day and night he was untiring in his attention and care, in conjunction with Talvanne, Robert, and Rosalie, and he admired the discretion with which they all affected to suspect nothing of that drama which had shattered the existence of the father and compromised that of the daughter.

But when Adrienne, reclining in her long chair, before the window, no longer needed but tranquillity and rest, the doctor returned to his cabinet and, alone with himself, endeavored to analyze and comprehend the evolution that had taken place in the domain of his ideas.

Rameau was not one of those common minds who resign themselves before an accomplished fact, without endeavoring to discover its causes and measure its effect. In a second he had seen his will waver, his resolutions change, and he sought to analyze the impulses of his being that induced this unexpected turn. He experienced no shame in having contradicted himself, he did not regret his surrender, he was happy for having done so. He had regained the fullness of his love for Adrienne, although still certain that she was not his daughter. Perhaps, he even loved her all the more, as if by that moral conquest she had taken surer possession of him.

A great trouble burdened his mind, and all his theories on the subject of amativity were overthrown. His materialism was at war with the following problem: "Here is a child, to whom I am not attached by any fleshly bond, that I ought to hate, for she is the material proof of my misfortune and my shame, and yet some unknown and invincible force unites me to her. Is it, then, the habit of loving her, that constant occupation which I have been engaged in, in relation to her, since her birth? Then I would cherish in her my own happiness, and I would be pleased with her for the care I had lavished on her. Would so commonplace an attachment, founded on reasons so low, have been able to resist the horror of the revelation that has been made to me, the anger with which it has inspired me? No!"

And he remained pensive in face of that enigma of a love imposed on his heart, so to speak, by an inexplicable power, and against the authority of which he could not react. He experienced a feeling of uneasiness. It seemed to him that the edifice of his convictions trembled on its

base. Having reached the decline of life, retired from its struggles, strong in his immovable faith, he had believed that he possessed an absolute intellectual security. He was sure of having tested everything, examined everything, judged everything in the domain of man. He had imagined, then he could halt, like a traveller on the summit of a hill slowly and laboriously climbed, cast a peaceful glance over the road traversed, and then rest in complete quietude.

And now suddenly the bounds of the territory travelled over receded, the horizons grew more remote, and were lost to view, and Rameau was astounded to find himself before an expanse immensely vaster than that he had explored. Or, rather, this space which opened out before his eyes, as if a veil had suddenly been torn in twain, he began to understand, was not wholly unsuspected by him, but he had voluntarily turned away his eyes, so that he might not see it. The field of materialism was his possession, his conquest, and having arrived at the end, suddenly, like Moses on Nebo mountain, he perceived an entire new country, the promised land whose existence he had denied, and which unrolled itself before him, the world of spiritualism, a thousand times more fruitful and more resplendent than all that he had theretofore admired.

With a tremor of unexpected initiation, he caught a glimpse of it, radiant and sublime. It was, indeed, the land where beauty was chaster, virtue sweeter, and love purer. Magnificent land of the ideal, where happiness was perennial, and where doubt disappeared in the tranquil light, like a cloud before the sun. Rameau, dazzled by the splendors that shone around him and penetrated him, endeavored to escape from their flames. He wished to flee, to descend again into his shadow. The immensity, through which he found himself borne, dismayed him, and he longed again for earth. He made an effort to re-enter the order of material facts once more. He grew calm,

recovered himself, and certain that he was not a victim of any sorcery, he asserted his reason, and endeavored to discuss.

If he admitted a principle superior to matter, he would then be compelled to acknowledge that which he had denied with all the strength of his human pride—the existence of a soul. He laughed bitterly at the thought. A soul! Where was it? In what part of the body was it domiciled? Of what organ was it the motive power? Was it in his brain it resided? Was it his heart that it set in motion? He knew that to be impossible! His soul was his intelligence, the ensemble of his ideas, developed and acquired by labor, the improvement of his physical instincts, augmented and refined, until they became moral qualities. The soul? It was the operation—the putting in motion—of his free will and his volition. Nothing else?

And yet, he recalled, with astonishment, the fact that his inclination was to hate Adrienne; that, left to his free will, he would have turned away from her in horror, and that, nevertheless, a force, that he could not define, but which he obeyed in spite of himself, had led him to the pillow of the child sprung from crime, and had inspired him with compassion, to fling him finally, trembling and penetrated with tenderness, at the feet of her whom he ought and wished to hate. And he loved her. 'Twas not a sudden surprise of the moment, a second of melting compassion provoked by a shock of the nerves, but a burst of mercy, profound and lasting, like a vivifying wave spread abundantly around. He loved her and, he felt clearly, that he would continue to love her all his life.

What superior power, then, had opened that sacred fountain which refreshed his mind? To what latent force within him did that power address itself? Oh! Call it his intelligence or his soul, it existed, it burned, impalpable and divine, and it was neither the hazard of the elements nor the science of men that could have created it,

Elevated once more into the heavens, Rameau did not wish to descend to earth again. He felt an unknown enthusiasm overflow within him, a fire of gladness kindled in his soul. It seemed to him that his brow burned, as his mind was exalted and his whole being was filled with a superhuman joy. All his former convictions he condemned as false ; all his doctrines now appeared to him vain. Around him he saw nothing but sterile débris and dusty ruins. The certainty of a superior being, the principle of all greatness, of all pity, and of all love, now appeared clear to him. With a cry of ineffable happiness, he confessed his blindness, and opened his eyes to the new light.

.

Two months later, on a fine day toward the close of July, the church of Sainte-Clotilde was filled with the representatives of all the art and learning of Paris, come to witness the marriage of Mademoiselle Adrienne Rameau and Dr. Robert Servant. The nave and aisles were packed, and the throng flowed out on the street. Through the open door, the choir, resplendent with lights, could be seen, and the last notes of the nuptial march could be heard.

The cortège had just entered, and, preceded by the two beadles striking the floors with the handles of their halberds, the bride leaning on her father's arm, passed along the nave in the midst of a prolonged murmur. Her pink cheeks and golden hair shone through the whiteness of her veil. She walked with a slow and graceful carriage, her eyes lowered in grave meditation, without hearing any of the praises passed on her beauty. Rameau, very pale, but smiling, and with a look of happiness, walked proudly and erect. Behind him came Talvanne and Robert and a long train of relatives and friends, bowing, as they passed between the rows of seats, to their acquaintances. And the organ, with joyous éclat, sending forth its pompous melody, exalted all hearts, while the flowers, spread all

around, and the candles lighting up the darkness, dazzled the eyes.

On reaching the seat prepared for them, the young couple took their places, and the ceremony began. Facing the choir, side by side, slightly separated from their family, seated in gilded chairs, they were both united in prayerful meditation. The priest at the altar was reading the sacred texts, and the silence was profound under the vaulted roof, disturbed only by the rumble of the carriages and the confused murmur of the curious on the street.

Talvanne, seated beside Rameau, like a brother, gazed with pleasure at the young couple, admiring the beauty of the bride and the elegant form of the husband. And recollecting all the efforts that had been made in order to secure their happiness, he blessed the Providence that had manifested its sovereign will. After so many dangers and trials they had reached the haven; their sufferings were now over, and the future would bring only happiness and joy.

At the same moment the priest, with measured step, descended from the altar to unite the happy couple. Adrienne's lifted veil revealed her face bowed in fervent prayer. To the question, "Will you take for your husband ——?" she answered, "Yes," with quiet distinctness, and her look, slightly turned aside, fixed itself on her father, as if to offer him all the happiness that filled her heart.

This glance of her sweet, blue eyes expressed a love so profound that Rameau's heart felt a thrill of exquisite delight. Meantime the sun, lighting up the windows of the choir, caressed with its rays the golden head of Adrienne, and illumined it as with an aureole of glory. She appeared transfigured, almost isolated, in a divine light, like a youthful saint descended among men. Rameau, in spite of these azure eyes and golden hair, no longer saw in her the child of wrong, but an angel that had been sent to him to comfort and console him in his troubles. All the bitterness and sorrow that remained in his breast melted in a delicious ecstasy, and, filled with humility and gratitude, he bowed his head. Talvanne, hearing Rameau speaking in a low voice, leaned over to listen, and he caught these words, breathed with a burning fervor :

"My God! Oh, my God!"

It was the atheist who was praying!

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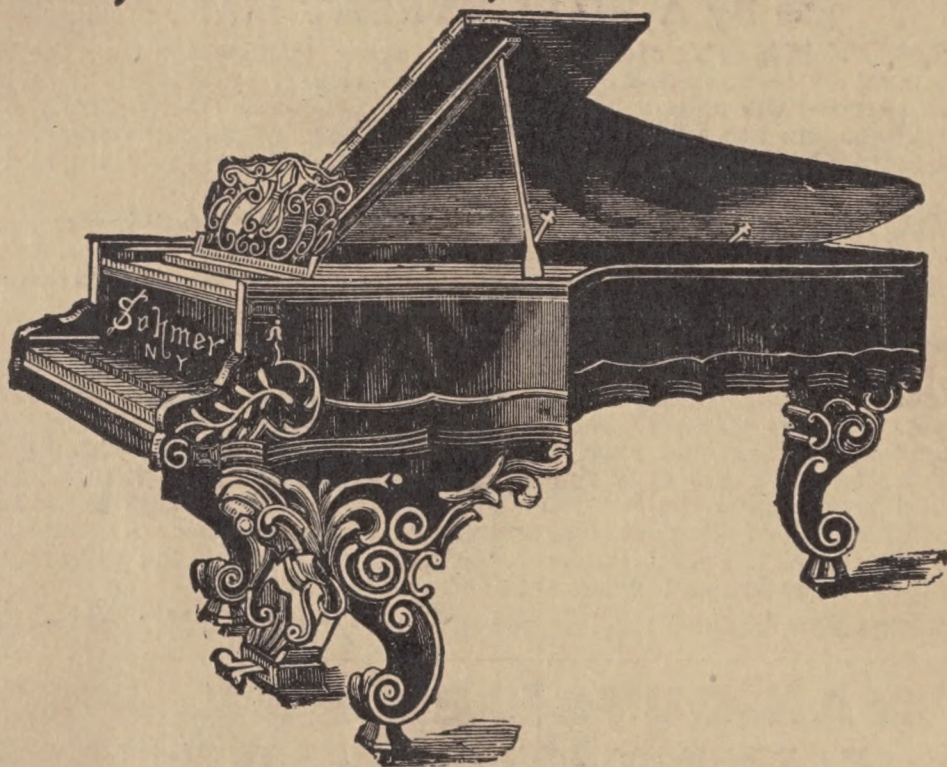
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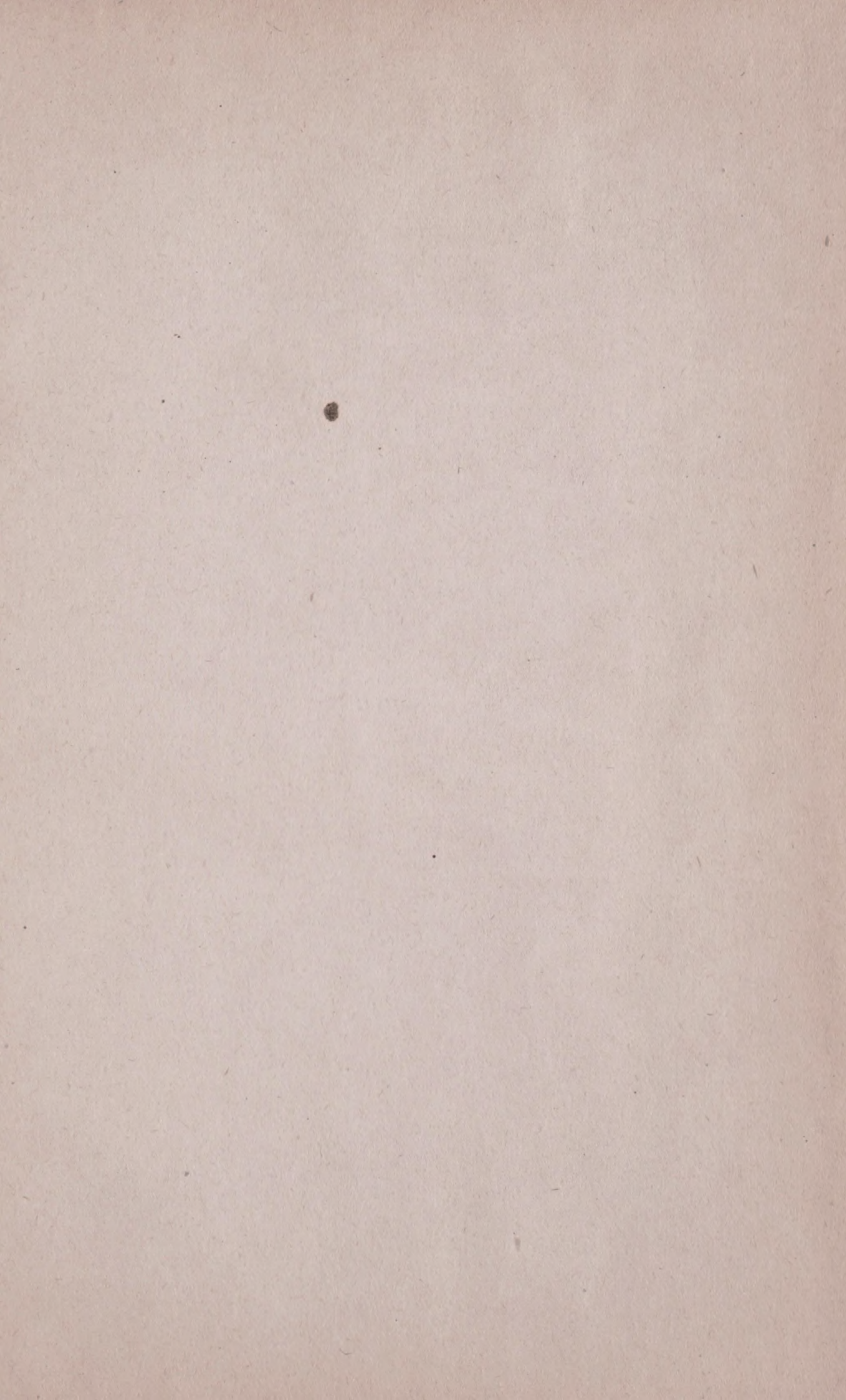
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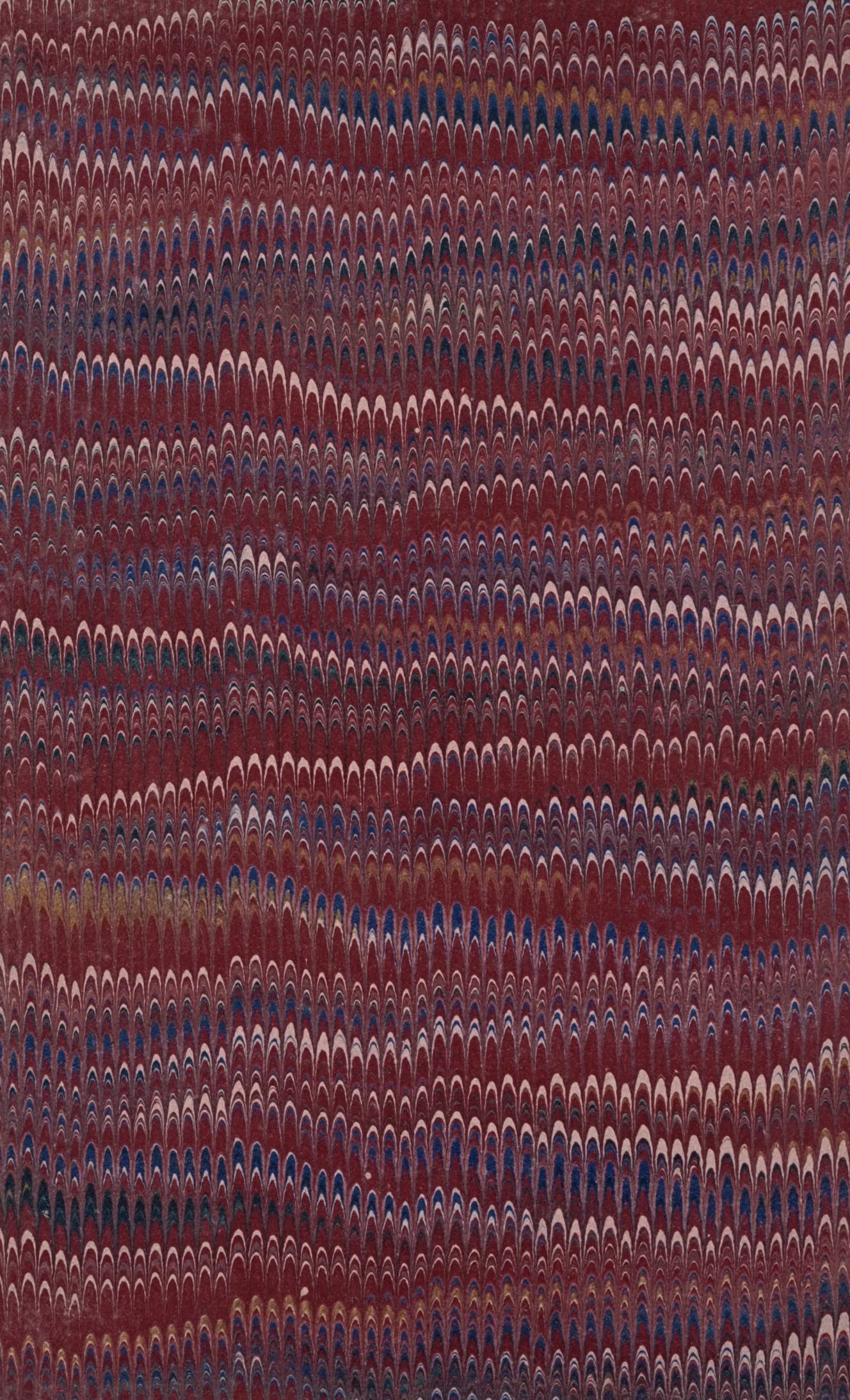
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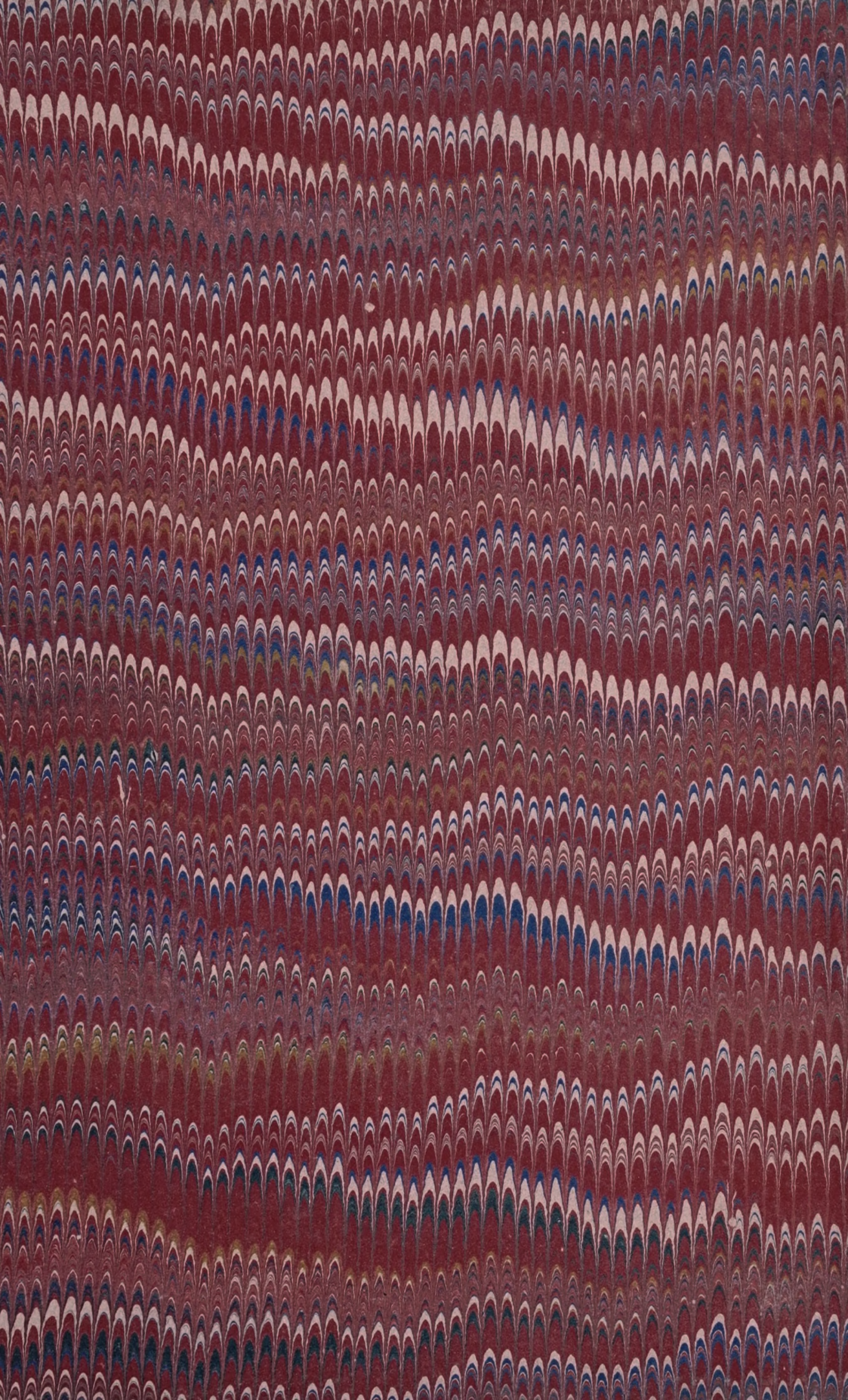
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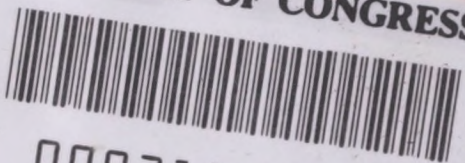
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